Subversive Representations of Education in Francophone Novels of the Colonial Maghreb

A Thesis Presented

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2011

French and Francophone Studies

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DEDICATION

With love, to my parents.

ABSTRACT

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FRANCOPHONE NOVELS OF THE COLONIAL MAGHREB

MAY 2011

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Much work exploring alterity and hybridity in the Maghreb ignores representations of education which confront seminal formative experiences, specifically education. French colonial education was problematic because it granted access to the colonizer's culture, yet it also created a rupture in self-identity for Maghrebi students. In this thesis, I interrogate the literary representations of sites and sources of education by analyzing how these representations discuss the tension between formal French education and informal Maghrebi education.

My thesis begins with a historical overview of colonial education in the Maghreb. I then discuss literary methods of negotiating identity, contrasting Arab and Western autobiography especially. Furthermore, I compare writing practices informed by a French education and a North African upbringing. Next, I compare formal and informal sites of education—the school, home and community—which articulate sources of alterity experienced during colonial childhood. Writers interrogate formal settings, including the school, classrooms, teachers, and examinations, and gaze upon the normative space and dominant culture which contradict that of the home. Conversely, informal settings provide subversive sources of education that resist the power structures of colonial France. These sites, including

parents, the home, and community, provide an oppositional education and a means of resistance to rejected systems of power.

Both settings represent spaces of cultural confrontation that serve as both a means of betrayal as well as benefit to students. The texts I consider discuss the dynamic end of the French colonial period yet were written over a period of time that allowed for personal reflection by the authors as well as for contributions by literary critics and historians that affected the perception and comprehension of the volatile period at the end of French colonialism and the fall of the Fourth Republic.

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CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"*Nous, Français, sommes en train de vous civiliser, vous, Arabes. Mal, de mauvaise foi et sans plaisir aucun. Car, si par hasard vous parvenez à être nos égaux, je te demande: par rapport à qui ou à quoi serons-nous civilisés,* nous? (*Chraïbi* Le passé simple)

Ils avaient peur de nous, de nous, de nous!...Mais les fourmis, les fourmis rouges. Les fourmis rouges venaient à la rescousse. (*Kateb* Nedjma)

Introduction

Education is the making of citizens and, in the case of French colonial education, it was a double-edged sword. Imperial France employed education as an instrument of assimilation throughout its colonies, and its centralized control over education policy provided a direct means of contact with and control over peoples subject to *la mission civilisatrice*. On one hand, it gave colonized peoples access to the dominant, colonizer's culture; on the other hand, it also created a rupture in self-identity and the perception of a Third Space in which hybrid, plural identities countered dichotomous identities. While much has been written regarding the Third

Space and the problematic of identity in colonial and postcolonial texts, representations of education have received sparse attention. What literature exists fills a mainly ethnographic role. My intention is to interrogate these depictions further by analyzing representations of different models of education in North African Francophone fiction that testify to the ways in which colonized peoples countered formal, French-sanctioned, colonial education. How do authors resist the language and culture of the colonizer through their creative inscriptions of scenes of education? What strategies of linguistic and textual resistance do they deploy to create a pluralistic Maghrebi culture and challenge European dominance?

In the following discussion, I explore how representations of education play into the negotiation of Maghrebi identity. I privilege works of autofiction: Leila Sebbar's *L'arabe comme un chant secret* (2007), Assia Djebar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007) and *L'amour, la fantasia* (1985), Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* (1956), Driss Chraïbi's *Le passé simple* (1954), Hélène Cixous's "My Algeriance" (1998), and Albert Memmi's *La statue de sel* (1953). These texts interrogate French and Maghrebi power structures in part through their representations of formal and informal education.

Colonial Maghrebi writers problematized education by resisting prescriptive French grammar and Western narrative techniques. Writers implemented procedures that challenged the syntax and lexicon of the French language in order to better reflect a culture that was a hybrid of Arab, Berber, and French cultures. This writing transformed the page into a "combat zone"[1] that reflected the struggle to gain

[1] Siassi, Guilan. "Itineraries of Desire and the Excesses of Home: Assia Djebar's Cohabitation with 'la langue adverse.'" *L'Esprit Créateur*. 48.4 (2008): 56-68. Web. 19 Oct. 2010.

independence, create a national myth less burdened by the colonizer's influence, and gain greater freedoms for women.

My thesis begins with an introduction that historically situates the problematic of a French education in a colonial setting. Two main sites of education—formal and informal settings—act as the major spaces in which *formation* takes place. Parents as educators, homes in schools, and mixed Algerian/European/*pied noir* peer groups function as sites of self-interrogation and spaces that instigate the quest for self-identity. Within formal settings, teachers, students, examinations, and the school itself are interrogated, and narrators employ a hybrid gaze to reflect upon this normative space and dominant culture. Formal school settings, especially, engender a double consciousness in the colonial subject by initiating a student into a culture and knowledge system contradictory to that of the home.

Conversely, informal settings provide especially oppositional sites that counter the power structures of colonial France, the French language, patriarchy, and Western influences. The family, mothers, Arabic and Berber languages, maids, and even the hammam provide an oppositional education and a means of resistance to rejected systems of power. Both settings provide spaces of resistance that serve as both a means of betrayal as well as benefit to students.

I have chosen to deal with these particular texts since they cover the dynamic end of the French colonial period and include works that were written over a period of time that allowed for personal reflection by the authors, take into account contributions by literary critics and historians that affected the perception and comprehension of the volatile period at the end of French colonialism and the fall of the Fourth Republic. Education is the making of citizens, and I hope that this investigation gives further insight into the colonial project and its literary legacies.

A Short History of the Colonization of the Maghreb

Charles Robert Ageron explains that France's colonization of Algeria was the result of a disagreement between the Dey of Algeria and the French king over unpaid debts. From 1830 until independence in 1962, Algeria remained under French control and was administered as a *département* of France. Shortly after invading Algeria, France began to focus on neighboring Morocco and Tunisia. Ageron notes that France played a major role in the dismantling and eventual withdrawal of the Tunisian Constitution of 1860. Tunisia also allowed France, Britain, and Italy to advise on its Financial Commission, and these countries' interests, rather than those of Tunisia, became top priorities. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, France announced that it intended to occupy Tunisia, and, with little resistance from other European powers, it did so in 1881. By 1884, Tunisia was a French protectorate. Morocco followed in 1912. Tunisia and Morocco remained protectorates until they were granted independence in 1956, but the war for Algerian independence dragged on from 1954-1962, until France was so weakened and disheartened by the war that it conceded defeat in Algeria. Under Charles de Gaulle's leadership, Algeria was granted independence on July 4, 1962. It is estimated that nearly one million lives were lost during the Algerian War, and floods of refugees were displaced to France, Spain, Canada, Israel, and Argentina (Horne 533). I now turn to the history of French educational policy in order to explore the background that led to these Maghrebi authors' sense of hybridity and alterity.

Race, Religion, and Curriculum

Gail P. Kelly notes the French government's advice to teachers preparing to work in the colonies: "We advise the teacher to especially be reserved in discussing anything about our political troubles and our violent changes in governing regimes" ("Interwar Schools" 168). Kelly's studies on French West African education are essential to this analysis for two reasons: because of lack of research on Maghrebi educational policy and because they provide an indication of the general attitude of distrust between colonizer and colonized. Her research reveals how French unease was reflected in curricular policy, policy which continuously chafed against Berber and Arabo-Muslim culture and religion in the Maghreb. The region remained volatile and hostile to most French education policies throughout the colonial presence, and the Empire's own political upheavals in the metropole during the colonial period evidenced the paltry control of the French government over the Hexagon itself, and unrest always threatened to spill over into the colonies.

Race played an important role in the French government's attempts at universal and secular education throughout the empire. For example, French West African education focused on vocational and agricultural training while French Indochinese education allowed for the possibility of competing for entrance to university by examinations and academic merit. In the Maghreb, as well, education was vocational rather than college-preparatory since the consensus was "[t]he Arab is an inferior and ineducable race...[there is] this sort of iron circle which surrounds the head of the true Believer, making him absolutely closed to science, incapable of learning anything or being open to a new idea" (Harik and Schilling 24). Kelly notes that Arabs were characterized in French West African curricula as marauding hordes

that brought war and tyranny to sub-Saharan Africa ("The Presentation of Indigenous Society").

In the colonial Maghreb, religion also played a primary role in education on a local level since no central education system existed. Local leaders traditionally organized Muslim and Jewish schools, which were supported through charitable donations, or *habous*. This lack of governmental interference was maintained during Ottoman rule as well. Leaders collected taxes but left local officials to deal with issues like education. *Médersas* and a few Islamic universities existed in major cities, in addition to yeshivoth. These served as sites of higher education devoted to religion and law, primarily. The status quo remained even throughout French rule. Amour Boum cites a Moroccan man who recalls such a system:

> Before the French arrival to the southern region, villagers sent their children to the local mosque to learn the Qur'an. However, a few became successful local scholars. People could not support their children or send them to Fez and Marrakesh to further their studies. Only a handful of families could train scholars who later became local judges and respected men in the region. They could read and write; they were nominated by the sultans of Morocco as our local judges. As for Jews, they had their own schools too and we never went to school together until the French arrived. Many of them were like us; only some of them could further their schooling in Marrakesh. (211)

Elsa M. Harik and Donald Schilling explain that the arrival of the French to Algeria in 1830 changed this traditional system. European *colons* forced *indigènes* from prosperous coastal areas to the *bled*, where schools were difficult to maintain and where money was scarcer. In 1843, *habous* and *waqf*, a type of religious charitable trust, were confiscated by the French, which made upkeep of schools and room and board for teachers impossible. Such damage to institutions, which were regarded as blessings from Allah by local populations, was extremely detrimental to European-

Arab relations. French approaches to race and religion in the school were as problematic as their approach to curriculum.

Curriculum was principally a response to the threat of political opposition. Alf Heggoy and Paul Zingg note that "all school reforms and special education programs were designed primarily as counterinsurgency efforts" (578). Arabic instruction was obligatory in Algeria from 1898 onwards, although it was officially a foreign language until 1947. However, only two and a half hours per week were devoted to it, and then students studied dialectal Arabic rather than classical Arabic. To make Arabic instruction even more complicated, courses were held outside normal school hours.

Djebar remembers:

> Je revis la scène, mon premier choc esthétique, c'est-à-dire total, mais "chez eux", là où, pourtant, la veille, on a refusé d'amener un professeur d'arabe "juste pour moi" ("Juste pour vous! Vous, une seule élève!" s'est exclamée avec une pointe d'indignation la directrice qui s'était déplacée parce que je m'étonnais tout haut, après avoir levé le doigt, puis en débitant ma réclamation: "En tant que première langue étrangère que je peux choisir, je voudrais apprendre littérairement la langue de ma mère, celle de mes aïeux—par ses poètes et ses textes anciens, et non comme au village où j'allais à l'école coranique et où le Coran s'apprend par cœur, donc sans vraiment comprendre!"). (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 118)

This refusal to grant legitimacy to the learning of Arabic highlights French insistence on citizenship creation. As Djebar notes, the Arabic language, and especially classical Arabic, would have provided a cultural and emotional link to Maghrebi identity. This would incite a rupture in a singular French identity and thus would threaten the cohesiveness of the French Empire. Curricular policy was a cornerstone of educational policy, and teachers were specially chosen to carry out this mission.

French teachers who were specially trained, proficient in Arabic, and willing to serve "in country" for five years qualified to work in Algeria. These teachers

played a pivotal role in colonial Algeria: they were regarded as secondary parents, and the schools as secondary families (Harik and Schilling 13). Sebbar writes extensively on the mini-France that the French school represented.

> La petite France des instituteurs laïques, mon père et ma mère, est dirigée de main de maître pour devenir intra-muros une République idéale où s'exercent, au nom de la justice, de l'égalité, de la fraternité, les lois de l'apprentissage scolaire dans les livres de la France, la langue de la France, la géographie et l'histoire de la France. (42)

These Republican values were intended to bring the Maghreb, through the young generation, into the fold of French ideology. Although citizenship was consistently denied to Maghrebis under French control, the French government sought to indoctrinate students to become part of the Empire.

Schools as sites of cultural and moral indoctrination removed Maghrebi children (both *indigène* and European) from familiar links created through the use of Arabic, Berber, patois (as seen in Albert Memmi's *La statue de sel*), religious practices, and cultural mores.

> [G]iven the total strangeness of the schooling suddenly being offered them, the rural Muslims had to react primarily to the character of the [teacher] who carried out the educational mission on the spot. It was a tribute to the French teachers and their backers that so many evidently performed their task so well—one of the few bright spots in the civilizing mission. (Harik and Schilling. 13)[2]

Stages of French Educational Policy

I now concentrate on historical contextualization of educational policy. Colonial response to French educational policy moved through three stages: a positive response (1830-1870), consolidation of *colon* power and resistance to metropolitan programs (1870-1918), and a standoff of *colons* and Muslims against colonial France from post-World War I until the decolonization of the region. It is

[2] Albert Camus's short story, "L'Hôte," details the dichotomous tension inherent in this role.

important to note the intrusive, paternalistic role that France played in her colonies: programs and reforms from Paris were abundant and rarely responded to current conditions in the colonies[3]. Robert Laurent-Vibert's 1924 *mise en valeur* of French colonies typifies official French attitudes toward its colonies and colonialism.

> [C]omportant des échanges économiques aussi bien que des balances de droits et de devoirs...les colonies paraissent une sorte de luxe, souvent inutile, parfois dangereux...Affirmons donc, sans arrogance (nous ne sommes pas des parvenus dans l'histoire du monde) mais avec une forte sérénité, que la France est désormais un Empire, un très puissant Empire, le seul qui mérite ce nom. (*ibid.* 21-22)

Laurent-Vibert's attitude points to the Empire's insistence on colonialism as a mission. France's belief in the ability to "civilize" an empire is evident even in contemporary retrospective rhetoric dealing with the colonial era. William B. Cohen notes several statements made by President Jacques Chirac in the 1980's and 1990's which reveal an official attitude that motivated and sanctioned such policies:

> [T]he accomplishments of France overseas [were] something great, ambitious, generous, and imperishable...France has no reason to blush[4] over these accomplishments, they are above all a task of civilization, progress, liberty, and fraternity...
>
> "We must be proud of the generations of pioneers who day after day fulfilled the ideals of the Republic...
>
> "[The colons] enrich[ed] what was French soil for 130 years. Pacification, economic development, the spread of education, the founding of modern medicine, the creation of administrative and legal institutions reveal the incontestable traces of the French presence not only in North Africa, but also on all continents…[enabling] the…[overseas] peoples access to higher destinies." (234)

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[3] In a contrasting example, the British colonial laissez-faire attitude towards education was markedly different and demonstrates a polar opposite approach to colonialism, one focused more solely on the economic benefits of colonization. Missionaries played a primary role in British colonial education since the British government was mainly interested in colonies as economic instruments.

[4] Chirac references allegations, now proven true, of officially sanctioned torture practiced during the Algerian War. For different perspectives on the Algerian War, see Henri Alleg's *La Question* (1958), Pierre-Henri Simon's *Contre la Torture* (1957) and Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's *Lieutenant en Algérie* (1957). These accounts detail first-hand the malpractices of the French Army during the Algerian War. Benjamin Stora has also written extensively on colonial Algerian history.

His perspective and apology are reminiscent of colonial policymakers' approach to *la mission civilisatrice*, which dismisses the merits of heterogeneity within the Empire. The same attitude was pervasive throughout the colonial period. Harik and Schilling describe the patronizing attitude of key French figures in Algeria at the time of conquest. Many policymakers regarded Algeria as bereft of culture, law, or tradition, and they felt it was France's mission to "strike at ignorance" and "[t]o pacify and enlighten" (*ibid*. 2-3).

The initial aim of colonial education (from 1830 to around 1870) was to train interpreters and copy clerks in order to facilitate French political and economic policy implementation. Chief governmental representative in Algiers, Pierre Genty de Bussy, attempted to establish schools whose classes would be held in mosques, but local Muslim leaders ignored him. In 1833, the first French-run school was opened with instruction being in French and Arabic. Two hundred students attended, most being Jewish since many Muslim families viewed French schools as an attempt to convert their children to Christianity.

The French were stymied as to how to *séduire* the local population. In the Maghreb, which Harik and Schilling note was viewed as a quite unstable region, educational policy was aimed more toward the general populace rather than at influential families. Notably, this contrasts to policy in French West Africa where French education was aimed at tribal chiefs' sons, whom the French viewed as key to consolidating political control in a region that lacked the cultural cohesiveness of the Maghreb or Indochina.

French ministers did agree on two policy principles: that a French education was superior and that education must be accomplished in French since the French language was equated with intellectualism. Finally, around 1850, education policy

started to develop. Responsibility for education was divided between the Minister of Public Instruction (for Europeans) and the Minister of War (for *indigènes*). Three French-controlled *médersas* were established in Algeria in order to train workers for Muslim courts. Arabo-French schools that catered to both sexes were set up in some cities in an attempt to circumvent the problems posed by unmanageable Qur'anic schools that were not centralized and whose teachers tended to be hostile towards French policy.

During this period, Europeans began arriving in greater numbers. Settlers included not only French but also Alsatians, Spanish, Italians, Maltese, and Greeks, among other nationalities. They came to Algeria as speculators, refugees, political prisoners, sailors, and farmers. As French control over business and agriculture grew, it threatened their economic interests and livelihoods, despite their growing majority. In fact, by World War I, only 20 percent of *colons* were of French descent (Harik and Schilling 78). Business interests frequently interfered with progressive colonial policy, and Harik and Schilling note that the "Algeria lobby" in Parliament, especially winegrowers, weakened any chance of policy change by legislation from Paris.

As a result, Arabo-French schools were unpopular reminders of French control over *colons'* new homes. Many disliked the idea of paying taxes for Muslim schools, yet the French persevered in their efforts at universal education, mandated by the Jules Ferry Law of 1883, which made primary school free and compulsory for boys as well as girls. As part of the Ferry law, colonial communes were ordered to pay for schooling, and this demand increased the ire of European settlers.

After 1870, political and popular attitudes toward education became more volatile and unwavering in their defiance of French policy. The first generation of Algerian-born *colons* evidenced a different sense of belonging to the Maghreb. This

land, rather than Europe, was conceived of as their homeland, and they felt entitled to the privileges of citizenship.

In 1912, when Morocco became a French protectorate, Georges Hardy was named Director of Public Instruction. A historian by training, Hardy had worked in French West Africa and he eventually published two ethnographic works dealing with Morocco, *L'enfant marocain: Essai d'ethnographie scolaire* (1925) and *L'âme marocaine d'après la littérature française* (1926). His opinion that "the" Moroccan is "lazy, disorganized, lacking critical judgment, hypocritical, and reliant on memorization" (cited in Boum 209) guided colonial Moroccan education. General Hubert Lyautey, resident-general of Morocco during the Protectorate, was aware of the failed educational policies that plagued Algeria, and so he endeavored to work with *indigènes* so that Moroccan educational structures would be preserved.

After Hardy's appointment ended, three types of native schools were established: *les écoles des fils de notables*, for children of elites; *les écoles urbaines*, vocational schools for workers and low-level fonctionnaires; and *les écoles rurales* (also known as *Berbères*), for agricultural training. Education finally reflected economic necessity and Maghrebi realities rather than political control imposed by far-away France, and Moroccans (indeed most North Africans) came to view schools as a means of social, political, and economic mobility. Boum recounts one Moroccan's experience of this academic dichotomy:

> When the French built the first primary school in my oasis, we were asked by our religious authorities to stay away from this polytheistic institution and encouraged to attend *Qur'anic* schools only. On the contrary, Jews, although they were reticent at the beginning, they ended up sending their children to both traditional religious and French schools. They studied French, Hebrew, and Arabic. They were able to attend French schools and became teachers and doctors. (212)

Thus we see the double-edged sword of French education. On one hand, it afforded new opportunities for Maghrebis yet it also threatened traditional society. On a more individual level, and as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, a French education directly led to rupture between student and community. Conversely, an informal Maghrebi education (through family and community) led to rupture between student and France. Both types of education, then, were subversive toward particularistic identities.

World War II and Beyond

By the twentieth century, Maghrebi attitudes had hardened toward France. The religious father, Le Seigneur, in Chraïbi's *Le passé simple* exemplifies this attitude as he refers to French schools as "le camp ennemi" (199). He advises his son, Driss Ferdi, to exploit the benefits of a French education while remaining suspicious of it.

> Apprends tout ce que tu peux et le mieux possible, afin que tout ce que tu auras appris te soit une arme utile pour tes examens d'abord et pour la compréhension du monde occidental ensuite. Car nous avons besoin d'une jeunesse capable d'être entre notre léthargie orientale et l'insomnie occidentale...Nous souhaitons de tout cœur que cette explosion ne soit qu'une cause de transformation susceptible de faire de toi un homme moderne et surtout heureux. (*ibid.* 23)

Le Seigneur typifies both the mistrust of the French as well as the realization in the Maghreb that the world was changing. Furthermore, vocal protests against French domination were growing at this time.

To counter these protests, the Blum-Violette Bill was presented to Parliament in 1936 in order to attempt Algerian reforms. It intended that "Muslim students, while remaining Muslim, should become so French in their education, that no Frenchman, however deeply racist and religiously prejudiced he might be...will any

longer dare to deny them French fraternity" (Horne 37). The bill offered citizenship to a maximum of 25,000 Muslims and was intended to solidify assimilation. However, protests from *colons* and war veterans as well as lobby groups and politicians resulted in the blocking of the bill. "We will never tolerate that even in the smallest commune an Arab might be mayor" (*ibid*.) was a typical reaction to the possibility of Arab equality.

World War II began and the Vichy regime stepped in to further citizenship for Jewish writers including Memmi and Cixous.

> The masks [of Algeriance and Frenchness] hold forth with the archetypal discourses that accompany the determined oppositions like battle drums. The Chorus of the French hurled out with a single voice that the Arabs were: dirty-lazy-incapable-thieves. It was the reign of the insult and the *apostrophe*. The characters were simplified and purified ethnically grouped people, one said: the Arabs and the French, and also the Jews and the Catholics (and no Berbers) (and no Protestants). But in our families concerned with others one used words pronounced above the mud and the gutter: "Israelites" "Muslims" or "*Indigenes.*" A great-uncle once removed owned a small clothes store down rue Philippe called "Le Pauvre Indigène." (Cixous 4)

Vichy France officially imposed the segregation of Jews in the Maghreb, yet again strengthening certain communities' feelings of alterity.

Vichy themes of *Travail, Famille, Patrie* were woven into colonial curricula so that pedagogy focused on physical education, manual labor, hygiene, and morality, and this propaganda was even stronger in the colonies because this was where cultural and emotional ties were considered weakest toward France. "[T]he Vichy colonial regime regarded the 'children of the Marshal' in Africa as much younger than their French 'brothers.' The presentation of Pétain as a loving father, who forgives his African children for being a little 'slow,' was to be repeated in other forms of Vichy colonial propaganda as well" (Ginio 299). This focus on youth and the lionization of Vichy culture acted as much as an ideological separation from the Third Republic as it

did a celebration of the National Revolution the Vichy government hoped to effect[5]. Ruth Ginio notes the lyrics of "Maréchal, nous voilà," a song[6] written by Biokou Saolmon, a Senegalese teacher and sung during an official visit by Maréchal Pétain in 1941.

> Maréchal Pétain, nous écoliers de Dahomey
> Nous te saluons—nous te saluons encore
> Aujourd'hui...
> Afin d'achever l'œuvre commence
> Sauver la France entier
> Nous autres, travaillerons avec ardeur et confiance
> Et tu seras fier de nous
> Notre Maréchal Pétain, Notre Papa
> (291)

The use of the informal pronoun "tu" and the appellation "Notre Papa" are remarkable since they highlight the perception of Pétain as a father figure in colonial Africa, one liable to be more compassionate than imperial France had been. Indigenous Maghrebis who supported Vichy essentially were rejecting treatment they had endured under the Empire.

End of an Empire

In February 1943, Algerian leader Ferhat Abbas published the "Manifesto of the Algerian People" which condemned French treatment of Algerian soldiers: "The French colony only admits equality with Muslim Algeria on one level; sacrifice on the battlefields" (Horne 42). The manifesto called for freedom and equal treatment for all Algerians, and it was a primary step toward the rejection of French control and, eventually, the Algerian War as well as the independence of Tunisia and Morocco.

[5] Another consequence was that it engendered the creation of youth organizations that would later counter colonial power.

[6] The song is also referenced in Djebar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (34).

Dissension within *colon* circles had been present throughout the colonial period and educational policies that would possibly lead to emancipation by Muslims were suspect. Alistair Horne describes French fears surrounding integration and full assimilation by Algerians into French society: critics such as Raymond Aron feared that Algerian birthrates would far surpass those of the French, and some politicians feared that Muslim deputies would switch political parties, "thus preventing [Parliament] from functioning normally. Integration would also slow down, if not half, any rise in the French standard of living, and he concluded, 'An Algerian France, if it pretends to regenerate France by governing it, will irremediably tear asunder the nation'" (306-307). Horne goes on to note the popular slogan popular at the time, "Fifty-five million Frenchmen from Dunkirk to Tamanrasset" (*ibid*. 307), demonstrating the belief of French and *colons* that full integration was still actually possible.

When the war for Algerian independence began on November 1, 1954, Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France maintained this stance, declaring that Algeria was "irrevocably French...Between them and metropolitan France there can be no conceivable secession...*Ici, c'est la France*!" (Horne 98). Charles de Gaulle, the next French president, came to office in part due to the Algerian conflict. He records his lack of faith in the policy of assimilation and integration in his memoirs: "Integration, then, was in my view no more than an ingenious and empty formula. But could I, on the other hand, contemplate prolonging the status quo? No!...[Continuing the Algerian War] would condemn our forces to a futile and interminable task of colonial repression" (Horne 379). French pride and refusal to give in to Algerian rebels protracted the war, and the rebels, aided by Tunisians and Moroccans, knew that the future of their country was at stake.

Revolutionary reverberations took place in schools, as well. The number of Free Schools (*al-madaris al-hurra*), which were religious-based yet more modern than traditional *médersas*, increased exponentially across the Maghreb before the outbreak of the Algerian War. These schools "formed a base for a local reaction against French colonial policies and the French-oriented school system" (Boum 213) and were eventually closed by French authorities and many teachers arrested. Harik and Schilling describe the extremes that the French began to go to in order to inculcate a love for France into colonial students: at one point, Parliament suggested holding hostage Algerian students boarding at a school in Paris (30).

In addition, Maghrebi schools were not producing a high rate of professionals, and this was due to fiscal and legal repressions such as the Code de l'Indigénat (1881) among other measures. Muslims and Jews tended to withdraw into their own communities and enacted an informal boycott against French schools. France's defeat in World War II, as well as greater contact with other cultures (British and American Allied troops, for example) and a growing global campaign for the independence of colonized peoples were all key factors that led to the Algerian War and the eventual withdrawal of France from the Maghreb.

When Tunisia and Morocco were granted independence in 1956 and Algeria, in 1962, Maghrebis were left to wrestle with the problem of their countries' futures. Identity became a key issue in the literature produced in the region during and after colonization. Chraïbi explains, "S'il n'y avait eu *que* le Protectorat et le colonialisme, tout eût été simple. C'est du coup que mon passé, notre passé eût été simple. Non, monsieur Sartre, l'enfer ce n'est pas les autres. Il est aussi en nous-mêmes" (Marx-Scouras 131). As will be discussed in the following chapters, the negotiation of

identity and the sites and sources of cross-cultural conflict are essential in creating national identity.

Conclusion

Memmi describes the protagonist Benillouche's metaphorical entrance into the postcolonial world in *La statue de sel*.

> Puis j'ai franchi la grande porte verte avec ses inutiles battants rouillés. C'est un décor irréel et ridicule, comme un carton-pâte pour théâtre de province. Et je me suis enfoncé dans les souks, entre les rangées de maisons basses, s'appuyant, se chevauchant les unes les autres. Voici l'architecture du pays où je suis né. Accepterai-je de vivre dans une de ces maisons sans eau et sans lumière, dans ces rues boueuses? Accepterai-je jamais de retourner vivre au Moyen Age? Mais aurais-je pu devenir "professeur de philosophie"? Me livrer au jeu des idées claires, enseigner aux jeunes gens à résoudre faussement les faux cas de conscience, l'imaginaire psychologie des manuels universitaires. Enseigner tranquillement, la pais dans l'âme et la pipe aux lèvres, comme Poinsot...Moi je suis mal à l'aise dans mon pays natal et n'en connais pas d'autre, ma culture est d'emprunt et ma langue maternelle infirme, je n'ai plus de croyances, de religion, de traditions et j'ai honte de ce qui en eux résiste au fond de moi...[J]e suis de culture française mais Tunisien...; je suis Tunisien mais juif. (364-365)

The "rusty doors" of tradition and colonialism had given way during independence. Maghrebis stood at a crossroads where they finally had a choice. However, students reared in French schools and Maghrebi homes faced crises of identity made far more fraught due to their hybridity. This complicated environment and all of its historical baggage serves as the background for the experiences of Francophone writers examined in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

NEGOTIATING IDENTITY

> *In "choosing" the novel, Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans who wrote in French were not only borrowing a language (that of the occupying nation); they were also adopting a form of expression for which there was no real national tradition. (Abdalaoui)*
>
> *...je ne suis qu'un personnage—d'un roman."*
> *(Chraïbi* Le passé simple*)*

Introduction

I now turn to a discussion of literary means of resistance and the consequential negotiation of identity. Francophone authors from the colonial Maghreb employ techniques of linguistic and formal resistance in order to subvert and interrogate the various power structures that circumscribe identity: the traditional family, patriarchal culture, colonialism, religion, and the normative culture of the colonizer. In autofictional texts such as Driss Chraïbi's *Le passé simple* (1954), Hélène Cixous's "My Algeriance" (1998), Albert Memmi's *La statue de sel* (1953), Leïla Sebbar's *L'arabe comme un chant secret* (2007), and Assia Djebar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007) and *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985), writers use formal, generic, and linguistic innovation to confront authority and challenge its prescriptive influence on identity. I am particularly interested in how these texts combine autobiography and

fiction to provide a poetics that reflects the hybridity of these authors' formative educational experiences. Furthermore, these subversive representations of education provide an insight into key Francophone Maghrebi authors' lives. Through their privileged access to French educational institutions and intimate exposure to indigenous Maghrebi culture in their childhood homes, the writers I will discuss possess a complex cross-cultural competence that provides the tools for genre-crossing and literary innovation.

While many scholars have focused on these authors as adults, my interest is in examining their academic and cultural *formation*. In my readings, I focus on scenes of childhood and adolescence where these writers evoke the key educational experiences—whether in the classroom or outside its confines—that helped to shape their hybrid identities and commitments. In other words, it is precisely the clash resulting from a French education in a Maghrebi social milieu that incited cultural rupture, situating these authors at the juncture of French and Maghrebi cultures. This positioning resulted in the negotiating of radical postcolonial identities and the subsequent new national literatures in the Maghreb. In discussing the representations of formal and informal sites of education in Francophone Maghrebi literature, I hope to demonstrate the educational symbiosis that served as a base for the expression of alterity and the rejection of outmoded traditions.

While situating their texts both historically and politically is essential, the writers' experimentation with literary genres is my primary concern in this chapter. Their combination of autobiography and fiction created a new national literature by breaking with both French and Arabic traditions. Furthermore, by considering the literary heritage of these authors, I aim to illuminate how the revolutionary writing

techniques employed in their works and their complex engagement in two canons led to the creation of a new national literature.

Literary Resistance

Texts written in the 1950's, during the Algerian War (1954-1962) and the advancement toward independence of the former French protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia (both in 1956), were instrumental creating a new Maghrebi literature written in French by authors whose first language was not French[7]. These texts also opposed the French colonizing mission by voicing resistance to cultural and military imperialism. Significantly, due to the objective lens employed in autofiction, these writers were able to critique their societies and also to react against ossified traditions and the dangerous religious fundamentalism emergent in the Maghreb.

Danielle Marx-Scouras notes that prior to the "Generation of '52" (which includes Memmi, Chraïbi, and Kateb), few Maghrebi writers used French as their language of expression (535). Maghrebis of European descent on he other hand, such as Albert Camus and Jean Sénac, were prolific writers in the French language and celebrated authors who employed the novel and essay as a primary form of expression. However, a generation of indigenous writers educated in French schools also claimed the novel as a distinct Maghrebi literary expression. Autochthonous Maghrebi authors literally caught between two worlds—and critical of both—found autobiography an especially useful tool to describe the alterity they experienced as well as to express anti-colonial sentiment.

These authors' ability to write in French is the grandest subverting of their French education because colonial authorities supposed them to be assimilated

[7] Sebbar is the exception in this particular list of authors.

insiders and thus loyal to the French colonial presence, especially to *l'Algérie française*. In considering the use of the French language, Marx-Scouras' declaration is thus especially problematic:

> Maghrebian literature of French expression runs counter to the idea of national literatures. Because it is "of French expression," it conflicts with postcolonial national identities that have been defined in terms of the Arabic language. However, it remains "francophone" and does not qualify to be regarded as "French"...The former colonies will always be *colonies*, and the writers who come from them will always be "francophone" rather than French. (*ibid.* 136)

Francophone Maghrebi writing is, in fact, a national literature. It is an appropriate expression of the North African situation since it does not attempt a wholesale rejection of colonial influence, which would be impossible. Francophone writing in the Maghreb functions as a discourse on identity, an identity not solely Arabic, indigenous, or European. This chapter will focus on Maghrebi negotiations of alterity: how do authors confront difference? How do writing techniques and genre blending reflect hybridity? Finally, how is the new, postcolonial, Maghrebi self expressed through autobiography and autofiction?

Jewish Double Alterity: Cixous and Memmi

Jewish writers have produced important texts as well. As a "discourse of collective memory...[from a] retrospective point of view" (Dugas 23), twentieth-century Jewish literature in North Africa acts as a collective autobiography that records the *non-dire* of a community that is doubly displaced. In fact, much Jewish Maghrebi writing reflects a willing "cohabitation," in Djebar's words, with the French language and European culture. Their forms and themes differ from Arabo-Muslim writers, for, although they too demonstrate the influence of the European novel, Jewish Maghrebi texts reflect anxiety over exile, enact a poetics of rupture, and fixate

on ancestral memory and the continuation of ethnic identity and practices. The French language in these texts functions, moreover, as the gateway to modern, secular learning and a source of intellectual inspiration for many Jews, which is in opposition to the negative attitudes toward French held by many Muslim Maghrebis. Given their state of permanent rupture and alterity within the Maghreb, many Jews did not feel culturally or linguistically treasonous for their use of European languages such as French, while many Muslims did.

Recollection, as mentioned before, is an essential feature of the works by Jewish authors discussed here, yet it is important to point out that memories serve as cautionary tales or painful recollections rather than happy reflections. Indeed, the title of Memmi's novel, *La staute de sel*, is based on an ancient story warning against the temptations of nostalgia. According to the Biblical story of Lot's family's exodus from the city of Sodom, Lot's wife is transformed into a pillar of salt (*une statue de sel*) when she looks back at the city they are fleeing. Nostalgia, or, yearning retrospection, causes her literally to stop and prevents her from moving forward. Memmi implies that an insistence on retrospection could hold the same fate for the Jews of the Maghreb.

In considering expressions of alterity and rejection, the case of Cixous and Memmi, as Jews, is particular since their double alterity (their non-belonging to both France and the Maghreb) shows Maghrebi identity to be complex, highly subjective, and in need of constant re-evaluation. Memmi writes in *La statue de sel*:

> Je suis Tunisien mais juif, c'est-à-dire politiquement, socialement exclu, parlant la langue du pays avec un accent particulier, mal accordé passionnellement à ce qui émeut les musulmans; juif mais ayant rompu avec la religion juive et le ghetto, ignorant de la culture juive et détestant la bourgeoisie inauthentique. (*ibid.* 364)

Through his critique of Jewish alterity as well as the protagonist Alexandre Mordekhai Benillouche's rejection of his native milieu, Memmi refuses the mythologizing of traditional culture as an expression of the rejection of colonialism. He claims his heritage as a complicated hybrid and, in doing so, frees it from reductive particularism (as do autobiographical works, which will be discussed later). Jean-Paul Sartre summarizes Memmi's conundrum when he attempts to define Memmi in the book's preface as "un écrivain français de Tunisie qui n'est ni français ni tunisien…Il est juif (de mère berbère, ce qui ne simplifie rien…)" (Memmi 9). He is a double outsider and thus, as a voice of difference, his subversive representations of power structures such as French schools and the dominant Arab Muslim culture challenge notions of homogeneity for both colonizer and colonized. Memmi presents a "secondary subversion" of technique and language since he writes as a *Jewish*, Tunisian, *Francophile* Maghrebi author. He stands out among his peers due to his ethnicity as well as his embracing of French. "To be colonized, for Memmi, is to be constantly qualified or subjected to a series of often contradictory negations and reductions" (Ross 163).

By taking pleasure in writing in French as well as recording his quest for westernization (rather than lamenting it), Memmi purposely differentiates himself from his North African contemporaries. He finds a more accurate expression of his identity in French culture and intellectualism, pursuits that make him stand out as *déraciné* and *déclassé*. These academic pursuits as well as key formative experiences in school and among peers are recorded in *La statue de sel* as a series of vignettes that are similar to Djebar's technique in *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*, published over fifty years later. Furthermore, his experiences as a double outsider provide the

basis for his work on colonialism, discussed in the seminal work in his oeuvre, *Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur* (1957).

Memmi's *La statue de sel* demonstrates this "cohabitation" with the colonizer as the author describes the childhood of Benillouche, a character based on the author himself. Benillouche experiences a gradual alienation from his home culture and even his native language as he recounts seminal childhood experiences. Memmi's use of the baccalaureate examination as the frame of the novel demonstrates a familiarity with Western writing techniques and recalls Proust's use of the madeleine as a segue into his past. Proust's madeleine is a sensory reminder of the past and, similarly, Benillouche's emotional experience of singularity and difference in the examination hall incites his own "remembrance of things past."

Memmi's use of autofiction as a medium (in comparison to Djebar's use of fragmentation and multiple narrative voices in her autobiographies, *L'amour, la fantasia* and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*, and Chraïbi's *découpage* style of autofictional narrative in *Le passé simple*) highlights the literary link already forged between France and the Maghreb. Francophone authors appropriated the medium of autobiography while being informed of Western literary techniques due to their French educations and exposure to French literature.

As stated, Cixous and Memmi share the particular experience of being Jewish in North Africa, doubly exiled through religion, language, and culture. Memmi's unique francophilia differentiates him from Arabo-Muslim Maghrebi writers since he longed to integrate himself into the European world and validate himself through that belonging. Other Maghrebi writers, Jewish or otherwise, record a detached affection or admiration for their European peers in school, yet they do not say that they

consciously strove to be "more European." Memmi recalls his attempts to emulate his French peers:

> Bien sûr, j'ai essayé, plus ou moins consciemment, d'imiter mes camarades...Je me suis obligé à écouter des opéras, à suivre des pièces de théâtre, notant soigneusement la biographie des auteurs et les renseignements sur les œuvres. Je fréquentais les mouvements de jeunesse mais j'y apportais une telle régularité, un tel sérieux que je ne pouvais jouir de leur spontanéité, leur enthousiasme, enfantin, étourdi, mais si reposant. (Memmi 122)

He goes on to detail the role that literature played in negotiating his identity.

> Et il est vrai que je travaillais égal à un jeune dieu. Et il est vrai que je travaillais comme une brute, me battant pour les prix et les places, en grande partie pour ces revanches. Mais jamais mes camarades ne se doutèrent de ce que cette aventure signifiait pour moi. Je ne me contentais pas de nos connaissances scolaires toutes digérées. Je commençais l'inventaire du monde des livres, je lisais à table, dans la rue en attendant la sonnerie, au lit jusqu'à une heure du matin, des tonnes de papier imprimé. (*ibid.* 124)

Memmi employs literature as a mode of self-expression: he utilizes literature (and doubtless the French canon to which he was exposed at school) to escape, reject, and criticize the "caricature camps," as Cixous describes particularist representations of Jews and Arabs, into which he was forced. Through his French education, Memmi sees a more accurate representation of the self that he strives to be, one even further removed from his roots in a North African Jewish ghetto. Consequently, he could have paradoxically been a type of poster-boy for French education policies.

Cixous was also an outsider in school and society, and her qualification as an outsider (defined in opposition to the French) engenders her own literary resistance. She provides another challenge to the problematic of identity in her essay, "My Algeriance," which deals with similar concerns as Memmi's novel in that both authors are Jewish and must deal with particular challenges as such. For example, she

details how, due to Vichy racial policy, her father was ordered to change his medical specialty.

Cixous rejects linearity and the traditional essay form and thus reinvents the form as she manipulates the French language. She approaches the topic of her Algeriance with pathos as well as humor; her use of irony and sardonic voice contrast the angst present in nearly all of the other works considered here. Cixous characterizes her nationality as a type of "condition"—she is not merely Algerian but is set apart by her nationality and discriminated against. "Algerian" is a noun that is intended to signify and encapsulate her. "The noun 'Algerian' was born very recently. Previously, 'Algerian' was only an adjective" (Cixous 4). Here she explains that historical circumstances have set her apart and that being an "Algerian" is the result of independence; this is just one example of many that problematize the negotiation of identity in the face of (de-)colonization. Independence brings the need for definition and categorization, and her Jewishness doubly sets her apart.

Cixous's essay humanizes the experiences of those marginalized by their own culture, language, and education, and derives a new poetics from the experience of marginalization. She wields Western literary forms but chooses to reject their strictures and to "play" with them as a form of resistance to cultural and linguistic domination. Cixous uses this technique to intensify her oppositional stance to colonization (cultural and linguistic, especially) in the language of "My Algeriance." She rejects traditional Western narrative forms that call for rising action, climax, and dénouement, as well as essay forms that require thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Instead, "My Algeriance" is fragmented and elliptical. She approaches the question of Algeriance through the analysis of objects such as a passport or the characterization

of the little boy who shined shoes. The essay, then, is an *examination* of alterity rather than a *trajectory*, as is Memmi's description of his gradual alienation.

Cixous revels in her "passporosity" (Cixous 3), the ability to navigate cultures and languages easily. She subversively conceptualizes her non-belonging as liberty from problematic, overly entrenched identities: "Neither France, nor Germany, nor Algeria. No regrets. It is good fortune. Freedom, an inconvenient, intolerable freedom, a freedom that obliges one to let go, to rise above, to beat one's wings. To weave a flying carpet. *I felt perfectly at home, nowhere*" (*ibid.*). In this example, she exploits the flying carpet motif in her essay yet challenges both the trope and cultural stereotype of that symbol: a Jew is flying away rather than an Arab. Cixous uses this marker in order to valorize her freedom to belong nowhere and everywhere at once, as well as to play on the idea of the "wandering Jew."

As a cultural, religious, and linguistic outsider like Memmi, Cixous is able to objectively criticize her milieu and employs a wide range of techniques to do so. She compares Algeria's situation to the war of Homer's *Iliad*, and in combining these cultural and literary references, she rejects dichotomies that separate cultures:

> North Africa was an arid and perfumed theatre, salt, jasmine, orange blossoms, where violent plays were staged. The scene was always war...We always lived in the episodes of a brutal Algeriad, thrown from birth into one of the camps crudely fashioned by the demon of Coloniality. One said: "the Arabs"; "the French." And one was forcibly played into the play, with a false identity. Caricature camps. (*ibid.* 4)

In resistance to these categories, she takes advantage of her "passporosity" in order to reference Homer's epic, a foundational text of Western literature[8], while at the same time presenting the Maghreb as a literal theater of war. She is able to move between

[8] The poem is also considered Mediterranean, and so it also possesses a "passporosity" that Cixous shares.

and among cultures and in doing so demonstrates the absurdity of "caricature camps" that falsely situate individuals according to an arbitrarily perceived grouping.

In the above passage, Cixous's deliberate literary hybridity situates her within several cultures. She mixes syntax, language, tropes, and cultural touchstones, demonstrating her ease at "passporosity." Moreover, she valorizes nomadism as she rejects stereotypical categories of identity, choosing instead to move between and among identities. She confronts the tropes of identity and uses them to express her (literary) history.

Memmi's and Cixous's explorations of Jewish alterity demonstrate the embracing of Édouard Glissant's Third Space, a space separate from the national or colonial identity. In fact, I argue that they move beyond the Third Space into the acceptance of their cultural hybridity. Memmi clearly accepts his alterity, yet he recognizes the problematic of it: he has been situated as an outsider by Vichy France and by the Islamic and Christian Maghreb. His negotiation of this problematic underscores the imposition of an identity onto this double outsider. Cixous, in her theorizing of "passporosity," also embraces her hybridity. Vichy France and the streets of Muslim-dominated Algeria attempt to situate her as an outsider, yet it is her cultural and linguistic nomadism that actually move her out of the Third Space. This Jewish privileging and valorization of difference leads me to the next group of authors who theorize alterity from yet another viewpoint: Assia Djebar and Leïla Sebbar.

Female Alterity: Djebar and Sebbar

Djebar's and Sebbar's work deals primarily with women and privileges their voices. Both authors valorize female alterity as a source of difference because it provides an alternative to a dominant, male-centric, or colonizer's voice. Djebar and

Sebbar critically contest and challenge how the "colonized," "female," Other has been perceived, circumscribed, and oppressed.

Considering *L'amour, la fantasia* and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* in relation to Djebar's oeuvre demonstrates her engagement with a wide variety of forms. Her work has followed a path that is emblematic of her times, from the influence of the New Novel to emerging techniques in theater, poetry, and film, as well as postmodern techniques including intertextuality, historiography, and fabulation. The form of *L'amour, la fantasia* is not that of a traditional autobiography, yet Djebar claims that the work is autobiographical. Jenny Murray cites an interview with Djebar, in which the author describes her intention in writing the novel: "'Mon livre...se voulait une première tentative autobiographique, le besoin de dire tout haut: qui suis-je?'" (64). In fact, several scenes from this novel are informed by anecdotes from the author's life, such as the little girl holding her father's hand on her way to school.

Djebar's approach to writing *L'amour, la fantasia*, a re-writing of Algerian history as well as the author's life, allowed a "hibernation period" for memories to be reinterpreted through a wider lens, that of collective memory and the history of a nation. During what critics term a decade of silence from 1967-1980, Djebar turned her focus to women's stories, as she collected oral histories from Algerian women and produced two films. She drew on her experiences and research from this period in writing *L'amour, la fantasia*.

Nulle part dans la maison de mon père, Djebar's 2007 novel, employs a more traditional narrative form as the author recounts key scenes from her childhood, the "father's house" that no longer serves as a refuge. By focusing on her formative

experiences, she sheds light on the ways that public and private, home and school, and French and Algerian societies worked against each other.

In the novel, Djebar documents her education in French colonial schools through a series of vignettes. In her account of these formative years, she is by no means a passive student. Hers is a resistance toward one of the most tangible representations of French power. She is privileged as an insider in both colonizing and indigenous cultures, yet she is also an outsider in both. Her representation of school life, teachers, and peers functions as an oppositional voice to French influence that attempted to erase Algerian difference, and her position as a subversive insider in the French system highlights the corrosion of French attempts to assimilate the indigenous population. She embraces her French education while also seeking out an alternative, hybrid education through peers, family, and correspondence with an Arabic-speaking boyfriend. The stories contained in *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* demonstrate her desire to transcend the constraints of educational policy that were intended to produce compliant, Europeanized Algerians who had little sense of their own history, cultural legacies, and language.

Djebar recreates and reinterprets scenes from childhood experiences, and situates her story as a wider story, that of Algeria itself, informed specifically by female voices and viewpoints. She insists on the subjective, the female, and the Other as legitimate, necessary voices in Francophone Maghrebi literature. Writing in French, Djebar employs a stepmother tongue, "la langue marâtre" (Djebar *L'amour, la fantasia* 298), because French nourishes her intellectually but not culturally or emotionally. She specifies that it can also be described as "la langue étrangère" (*ibid.* 180): French is not her native language, and so it takes on an ominous identity (*the*

foreign language) because of its association with France and the colonial legacy in Algeria. The language can never be authentically "hers" at any rate.

Sebbar faces similar linguistic and cultural dilemmas. She is an outsider in both of her home cultures, in Algeria as well as France. Although she chooses to be a French citizen, resides in France, and speaks and writes in French, she is a pseudo-exile. Her perspective on Algeria is formed from vague memories of childhood which are dredged to the surface by adult experiences, flashes of insight during moments of sadness, regret, and nostalgia. Her book, *L'arabe comme un chant secret*, is a collection of essays from works including *Je ne parle pas la langue de mon père* and *Le corps de mon père dans la langue de ma mère*. Like Djebar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (both were published the same year, in 2007), Sebbar's essays are fragmented, highlighting the subjective experience of growing up rather than adhering to a constrictive timeline.

Sebbar provides an atypical viewpoint since she was surrounded constantly by the French language and culture while growing up and thus perceived Algerian culture as foreign. Her first language is, in fact, French, yet the informal education provided by family (especially her paternal Algerian family) and society underscores the difficulties of a divided existence. She is taught by her mother to "be" French, while Algerian society and her father's family teach her how to "be" Algerian. Her essays reflect this sense of rupture and hypocrisy since many are from the (too) honest point of view of a child.

Sebbar's themes and style reflect the *mixité* of emotions, experiences, and influences that have shaped her. Her syntax and punctuation reflect this diachronic understanding of her childhood and culture and she moves from present to past tenses frequently, and speaks of the past in the present tense. The use of commas is quite

heavy in Sebbar's narrative, reflecting the continuity of her memories, as well as their link to her present[9]. Most importantly, she speaks of her childhood, and especially her father, with a mix of respectful tenderness and the regret of partial comprehension. Due to her incompetence in the Arabic language, she lacks the most basic mode of connecting to her paternal heritage, and finds herself marginalized from her childhood home and the people she longs to know fully.

Sebbar and Djebar employ autobiography and autofiction in order to legitimize female alterity in a male-centric literary world. Their valorization of a voice of difference is arguably the most radical and dangerous affront to particularism and collective Maghrebi identity because of the taboos broken in these texts. The reader enters the female world and mind and is able to see from beneath the veil, whether that be the literal veil of the woman in *purdah* or covered in the streets, or the veil of silence that traditionally prohibited female speech. These women negotiate their identities as women and Others, and they continue to carve out and establish a space for female alterity in the Maghreb and its emerging canon.

Ethnic and gender marginalization are confronted in the preceding texts, and female and Jewish authorial voices are, then, extremely important. Finding a voice and then employing it are radical steps to creating a national literature and identity, and, as I next discuss, Chraïbi confronted the silence and prohibitions that he felt held back his nation from progress.

Colonial Alterity: Chraïbi

[9] Cixous, Chraïbi, and Djebar also reject traditional syntax, punctuation, and chronology in order to express emotion and to claim writing outside the strictures of prescriptive grammar.

Chraïbi's *Le passé simple* was banned by the Moroccan government until 1977 because it dares to expose corruption and backwardness in contemporary Moroccan society. The work "put an end to the colonized/colonizer duality that we still find even in such works as Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*" (Marx-Scouras 132) because Chraïbi refused simplistic dualities and, in doing so, challenged the accepted colonial dialectic that pitted one particularized group against another—in other words, the novel demonstrates the fallacy of all Maghrebis acting or believing in one unified manner. Chraïbi criticizes the colonial presence as well as fundamentalist attitudes that began to find scant justification in a society on the verge of upheaval.

Furthermore, in *Le passé simple*, Chraïbi rejects conventional mores and values, those of religion, traditional Moroccan culture, and bourgeois society—all of which are silencing, heavy, abusive presences for him. His novel is "[o]ne of the first Moroccan novels. A flamboyant entrance" (Abdalaoui 11). He confronts "the tyranny and hatred that dominate familial relations…and the problems with which Morocco was obliged to wrestle after independence…[H]is manner of writing—that of inscribing in an essentially autobiographical process something that supersedes simple recounting, for his text refuses transparency, simple retranscription, or a servile fidelity to reality" (*ibid.* 13).

The protagonist, Driss Ferdi, is often read as a thinly disguised version of Chraïbi himself, and the novel centers around Driss' rebellion at age nineteen, the same age that Chraïbi was when he left his home country to study in France. Driss' rejection of the two worlds of which he is a product, and the violence and language through which he accomplishes this rupture and affirms his identity, highlight the ways that both informal and formal sites of education work against each other.

Chraïbi is an iconoclast because he dares to speak up and show an ugly side to the "good" colonial subject (which he accomplishes through the autofictional Driss). He faced heavy criticism from fellow Moroccans upon the novel's publication when he dared to air the dirty laundry of the nation's families: "Maghrebian society, Arab society, had learned to value, as Mohamed Dib puts it, 'dignity more than truth'" (Abdalaoui 12).

Chraïbi's political concerns for his country are represented in the characterizations of Driss' mother and father. The father, aptly named Le Seigneur, is a religious fundamentalist who detests the French presence but hypocritically takes advantage of it in order to satisfy his own narcissistic desires for social status. Driss's daring opposition to his father is the only censure that Le Seigneur encounters while he abuses the rest of the family into silence. Mirroring Chraïbi's opinion, Driss regards fundamentalism as dangerous to the nation, represented in the figure of the mother, who commits suicide because she cannot defend herself in the presence of the father, a bigoted bully, and thus the novel is a cautionary tale addressed to Morocco as well as a protest against societal ills.

For Chraïbi, the act of writing, a symbolic loquaciousness in the face of the silencing, abusive father (or any oppressive presence, whether it be the colonizer or Islamic fundamentalism) resists silence born out of fear. Driss confronts his dominating father yet this audaciousness itself is subversion, and it causes Driss to transform into his father, a bully in his quest for freedom. Oppression of the mother—a symbol of the traditional past—and complete eradication of the influence of Islam—represented in the religiosity of Le Seigneur—are overly extreme responses to decolonization. Driss represents the middle ground, the objective, educated,

literate, sociopolitically aware group of Moroccans who are nevertheless adolescent in their approach to nation-building and modernity.

Chraïbi's novel deploys the family as a metaphor for the nation, and the tale is a protest, morality tale, and a warning for a nation recently independent from France. Chraïbi's novel was, like the Jewish and female authors previously discussed, a key text in the creation of Maghrebi national literatures. Significantly, these authors all exploit autobiography in some form in order to negotiate their own marginalized identities. I now move to the following analysis of autobiography and autofiction in this cross-cultural situation and discuss how these genres are deployed and how they reflect negotiations of hybrid identities.

Autobiography

The aforementioned narratives are all informed by the experience of colonialism. The course of history and the discourse of colonial domination influenced Maghrebi storytelling, and these texts respond by challenging the "dominant" narrative. They offer alternative representations of the Maghreb and provide a template for re-comprehending that society, and autobiography plays a key role in reclaiming Maghrebi history and identity. It is the "devoir dire," in Assia Djebar's words (*Ces voix qui m'assiègent* 65), in which the colonized possesses agency and re-imagines his experiences and nation through his own perspective.

Here it is useful to mention the Arabic literary tradition to which Francophone Maghrebi authors are heir. Dwight F. Reynolds disputes the misconception that autobiography is a specifically Western form. He notes that during the fifteenth century, at the height of Arabic autobiographical genre:

> [The author Jalal al-Din] al-Suyuti does not use a noun for the concept of autobiography but rather a verbal expression, *tarjama nafsahu* or *tarjama li-nafsihi,* which, among several interrelated meanings..., signifies "to compile a titled work/entry on oneself" or "to translate/interpret oneself," in the sense of creating a written representation of oneself. (3)

Reynolds notes that the Arabic autobiography has roots as far back as the ninth century, and it was a prominent literary form by at least the twelfth century. In fact, the form was so significant that during "the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a sense of 'autobiographical anxiety' emerged that motivated authors to pen elaborate defenses of autobiographical writing" (*ibid*. 242).

Djebar underscores the difference in Western and Arabic technique when she invokes the autobiography of Algerian leader "Ibn Khaldoun, de la même stature qu'Augustin, [qui] termine une vie d'aventures et de méditation par la rédaction de son autobiographie. Il l'intitule 'Ta'arif,' c'est-à-dire 'Identité'...Il obéit soudain à un désir de retour sur soi: le voici, à lui-même, objet et sujet d'une froide autopsie" (*L'amour, la fantasia* 301). This revisiting of one's life is a recounting of one's identity, literally a re-writing of life and the establishment of identity for posterity's sake. Djebar equates writing with both life and death through these metaphors; indeed, every author discussed in this chapter employs autobiography and autofiction to account for his life and to establish his identity.

In contrast to the Western autobiography of this era, which functions somewhat as a morality tale, the Arabic autobiography is an account of Allah's blessings, one's good works, and a historical record intended for later study. This particular form was therefore an attempt at literary and spiritual dialogue. Such a sense of literary continuity (akin to a genealogy) contributes to the perception of "life as a sequence of changing conditions or states rather than as a static, unchanging

whole or a simple linear progression through time" (Reynolds 4). In fact, every work discussed in this chapter mirrors this literary legacy since they are each divided according to "subject" rather than chronology.

For example, Djebar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* is divided into chapters titled by subject ("Madame Blasi," "Au réfectoire," and "Nous...trois!" for example); the three parts of the book roughly divide the author's youth into childhood ("Éclats d'enfance"), adolescence ("Déchirer l'invisible"), and teenage years/young adulthood ("Celle qui court jusqu'à la mer"). Memmi's *La statue de sel* divides Benillouche/Memmi's youth into roughly the same parts ("L'Impasse" [the aptly named street where the protagonist grows up], "Alexandre Mordekhai Benillouche," and "Le Monde") and privileges broad incidents such as "La colonie" and "Le lycée," implying that their analysis as multiple narratives fitting into a greater whole makes them more germane to understanding the protagonist. Djebar privileges autobiographical chapters in *L'amour, la fantasia* by giving them titles in the Première partie (although she reverses this in the Deuxième partie, ostensibly in a nod to the importance in the text of history), but she divides historical and autobiographical accounts into separate sections, preventing the book from becoming historical fiction. Chraïbi mirrors Djebar's arrangement of textual material according to the nonliterary. Djebar bases the Troisième partie of *L'amour, la fantasia* on the musical form fantasia (hers is comprised of five movements in addition to a final ululation, or *tzarl-rit*); Chraïbi divides the five chapters of his text into the five parts of a chemical reaction ("Les éléments de base," "Période de transition," "Le réactif," "Le catalyseur," and "Les éléments de synthèse").

Textual forms reflect a dialogue between Arabic and Western literary traditions, and the autobiographical and autofiction genres serve as "confessions" (à la

the ancient Algerian theologian Augustine[10]) as well as spiritual account-keeping: Memmi and Cixous reject their characterization as "only" Jewish or Arab; Chraïbi presents Moroccans as a society with agency, actively rejecting colonial power; Djebar re-imagines the Maghreb, especially from a female viewpoint; and Sebbar rejects a simplistic characterization of herself as Algerian. These authors challenge power and accomplish personal bookkeeping at the same time.

The works discussed here therefore mirror Reynolds' analysis of the Arabic autobiography, specifically in the case of al-Suyuti:

> [T]he work as a whole rejects the concept of ordering a life into a single narrative, a life "story" in the literal sense. Rather, it derives from an intellectual methodology in which classification, categorization, and description were [or, are] the ultimate tools for the acquisition and retention of knowledge. Whereas western autobiography achieved its greatest popularity as a genre in tandem with its fictional counterpart, the novel, the threads of the pre-twentieth-century Arabic autobiographical tradition were spun from the raw material of historical inquiry. It is fact and specificity, along with a fascination for individual accomplishments and intellectual production, that most interested and most commonly structured biographical and autobiographical texts of the Islamic Middle Ages. (5)

In short, linearity and a chronological accounting of life are not as important as broad questions and concerns about one's spiritual and intellectual state. In these contemporary texts' resistance to the cultures of which they are products, the form and techniques created as a result craft a hybrid of languages and textual tactics. They re-approach the form of autobiography and its purpose, and they mix French, forms of

[10] In fact, Djebar explicitly links Western and Arabic literature through her reference to Augustine in several works, including *L'amour, la fantasia*: "un Algérien, nommé Augustin, entreprend sa biographie en latin...la même langue que celle de César, ou de Sylla, écrivains et généraux d'une 'guerre d'Afrique' révolue" (300). The term "confession," also an obvious link to Augustine, appears in *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*: "[c]ette confession (et je remarque à temps que ma culture musulmane d'origine ignore ou s'écarte de ce dévoilement, du moins face à un prêtre) peut m'inciter pourtant à battre ma coulpe, tout en flattant peut-être ma vanité d'écrivaine" (445).

Arabic, and Berber, transforming the page into a verbal challenge to colonial power, specifically to reductive notions of the nation and identity.

Autobiography and autofiction utilize polyvocality as well as individual expression. According to Azadé Seyhan, writing about the self results variously in a diary, polyvocal history, meditation, and/or unauthorized biography. "[A]utobiography, because it is a genre that defies containment yet contains the various (psychoanalytic) tropes of displacement and transfer, is uniquely positioned to lend expression to the anxiety of memory" (*ibid*. 161). Autobiography is therefore a form of revelation for these writers, an act that makes one *nu*, in Djebar's terms. Mildred Mortimer notes, "Unlike Western civilization which…delights in the public airing of all private matters—desires, sins, suffering—Islamic culture is bound to the *non-dire*, or unspoken, in other words, to silence; it prohibits personal disclosure" (103) of the shameful and salacious. The Francophone Maghrebi autobiographical and autofictive forms, in their alterity to both Arabic and Western literary traditions, are a step outside traditional cultural forms and subjects. This in turn allows the examination and creation of identities that permit writers to differentiate themselves from oppressive culture as well as to speak the poetics of an unvoiced collective, for women, Jews, and secular Maghrebis, for example.

Autobiography furthermore differentiates the individual from the group, and these authors' (semi-)autobiographical texts re-situate the gaze of the colonizer. The individual possesses a voice through the text, making him stand out from rather than blend in with the amorphous group regarded as "the colonized," which is possible because of its opposition to the dominating group, "the colonizer."

> The individual is not initially defined as a member of his or her group, as a local among locals, a Jew among Jews, or an African among Africans. Rather he (or she) is defined relative to the other group, the

> one that dominates, and the one that is perceived as cohesive because of a kind of violence, whether it is the invasive, forced act of colonization, the hatred of anti-Semitism, or the triumph (again, a kind of power or force) of the European model. (Schehr 60)

Literature thus reflects these social realities: colonial education policies were fashioned in such a way that the colonized subject was "formed" to be a producer or worker for the French state, one that the colonizer was able to speak to on his own terms, in his own language. The violence of which Schehr writes is the violence committed against identity and expression, and thus the texts of Francophone Maghrebi writers are the beginning steps toward formation of national literary identity. These writers come to claim and embrace hybrid identities through their practice of autobiography.

Polyvocality can also distance the author from the autobiographical subject. Djebar uses multiple narrative voices in her autobiography, *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*, an approach to "unveiling" that distances the author from particularly distressing situations and allows for an *autopsie* or *miroir* through writing. For example, after the author's suicide attempt following an argument with her fiancé, Djebar writes of herself in the third person and invites the reader to gaze upon the (auto-) biographical subject:

> Rejoignons plutôt le personnage [Djebar elle-même] que l'ambulance emporte en ce matin d'octobre 1953 pour le conduire à l'hôpital…Mais je n'en ai cure, encore traverse par la décharge de la pulsion de mort, l'irrésistible détente de l'envol, dans l'exaltation de me dissoudre aux quatre coins de l'immense espace de la baie d'Alger, seul et dernier panorama entrevu. (406)

The multiple "I" used here is capable of self-reflexivity and independence, feats Djebar has recorded as being difficult, if not impossible, for a woman to accomplish in Maghrebi culture and literature. Similarly, Memmi uses the character Benillouche as an alternative voice in the same way that Chraïbi uses that of Driss: "je ne suis

qu'un personnage—d'un roman" (Chraïbi 202), Driss complains. This meta-awareness provides an objective space for autopsy, as Djebar recognizes it, as well as a site for the objectification of the subject.

Moreover, polyvocality provides a veil, in Djebar's terms, when authors break taboos. Djebar's recollection in the third person of her ambulance experience challenges several taboos: that of the woman being gazed upon, the woman speaking, the woman having freedom of movement, and the woman confessing a suicide attempt. Benillouche, in sitting his baccalaureate exam, dares to voice the hopelessness of his, i.e. Memmi's, generation:

> [J]'ai compris que ces devoirs ne me concernent plus. Cette fois, le ressort est complètement détendu, mes forces, ma volonté m'abandonnent ici. Je ne suis ni étonné, ni déçu. Comment ai-je pu m'intéresser à ces jeux si étonnamment futiles?...Tous, vieux étudiants retardés par la guerre ou jeunes garçons à la chance continue, sont avares de leur temps. Gagner du temps, perdre du temps. Qu'ai-je encore à perdre? Un seul enjeu qu'il faut miser enfin. Peut-être ai-je perdu déjà. (*ibid.* 12)

This ability to give voice to the dominated subject in a setting more concrete than fiction makes this autofiction highly subversive in the (post-)colonial Maghrebi context because it publicizes the real, relatable discontent and rejection of taboos that threaten social order in nations already on the verge of revolution and independence. Moreover, French language texts meant that metropolitan French and *pieds noirs* were able to read the discontent of the colonized, and this influence on French public opinion was (and still is) dangerous to the valorization of Republican values as well as to French military operations in the Maghreb during the Algerian War, and even to metropolitan French security in the face of Algerian-sponsored terrorism during the 1990's and today.

In addition, authors use autobiography and autofiction as tools in their quests for self-knowledge amidst an environment designed to transform and "evolve" them from their native languages and cultures. As an example, Djebar is among a handful of Algerians surrounded by European peers in their schools, confronted daily by her difference from European girls. Chraïbi's Driss, after an exam, is straightforwardly told, "Nous, Français, sommes en train de vous civiliser, vous, Arabes. Mal, de mauvaise foi et sans plaisir aucun" (208). Memmi and Cixous record their angst as colonized Jews, doubly set apart. Both through their privileged educations and ethnic origins, these authors are set apart, and their use of autobiography not only subverts the normative influence of the colonizer and his perception of the colonial subject as a collective, it also subverts the collective communitarian spirit of traditional Maghrebi, Islamic, and Berber cultures.

This self-distinction defies oppressive power(s) in its insistence on the individual voice and the self's desire and perception, yet it also defies convention in its affronting of *hochma* (shame). For example, Chraïbi suffered censure for his public criticism (his unveiling) of Moroccan society and numerous Maghrebi writers have been censored, threatened, or even killed for their writing. Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge* (1961), Henri Alleg's *La Question* (1958), and Djebar's *Le Blanc d'Algérie* (2002) record the sometimes deadly consequences of opposition to ruling powers, whether French colonial or Islamic fundamentalist.

Expository writing can be a way to *mettre à nu* oppressive power systems, yet it can also, paradoxically, hide; Djebar problematizes exposition by characterizing it as a veil.

> [Auparavant] j'écrivais tout en restant voilée. Je dirais même que j'y tenais: de l'écriture comme voile!...Car si écrire c'est s'exposer, s'afficher à la vue des autres, se voiler même écrivant a été, pour moi,

> un mode naturel. "Se voiler" ne signifiait pas vraiment pour moi se travestir, se déguiser pour se cacher. (*Ces voix qui m'assiègent* 97-98)

Her intention is not to disguise herself in order to evade notice. She wishes to move freely through the world like "[u]ne femme-fantôme" (*ibid*. 99) who is able to look out onto the world and interpret it. She can thus gain (or retain) agency. This removal from the gaze of others, "c'était bien s'aventurer au-dehors, et en même temps, se préserver, 'Se garder'!" (*ibid*.). Her word is public, yet she is removed from view by the page and pen. The reader is, in a sense, a captive audience who must listen to Djebar's voice and gaze through the author's veil. Autobiography and autofiction therefore employ subjectivity in order to reckon with difficult, private and thus hidden subjects.

In contrast, Western literature has a long history of autobiographical texts, such as Augustine's *Confessions*[11], that reflexively grapple with problematic formative experiences and *mettre à nu* the authors in order to warn against sinful behavior. These Maghrebi texts are informed by such techniques and so they expose the author while simultaneously hiding him behind the veil of the page or through a doppelganger in autofiction. Furthermore, female voices offer an alternative, both to patriarchy and colonialism. These voices represent untold stories (especially those by women in *L'amour, la fantasia*, such as the chapters entitled "Pauline" and "Les voyeuses") and the refashioning of history. In other words, autobiography and the female voice defy a singular, particularist representation of both the self and the nation. Djebar's use of autobiography and the female narrative voice resists patriarchy as embodied in male-dominated culture as well as the "second father," colonial France. This aspect of her writing relates to Memmi and Cixous's rupture

[11] This text is also claimed by Maghrebi authors as a North African one.

with Muslim Maghrebi identity as Jews, as well as Chraïbi and Sebbar's rupture with "traditional" Maghrebi identity.

Hence autobiographies, at least for Djebar, are "special books," "livres à part" (Djebar *Ces voix qui m'assiègent* 448), and are the voices of the dead—"qui, à la dernière page, se tait absolument" (*ibid.*). Djebar also describes autobiography as "ma propre autopsie" (*Ces voix qui m'assiègent* 104), once again associating writing with death. They are the resurrection of the past during which the writer reinterprets and re-examines the life, and they serve as a re-evaluation and reconciliation, "[s]e dire à soi-même adieu" (*ibid*. 449).

Conclusion

In conclusion, these authors claim and reconfigure literary traditions for themselves and are able to express taboo subjects through subversive literary techniques. They accomplish their quest for identity and self-expression by negotiating multiple identities and situating themselves at cultural and linguistic crossroads. Autobiography and autofiction thus allow the author to create a narrative that opposes domination, that is, a "norming" narrative. Such literary practices valorize multiple identifications and actually privilege hybrid identities.

An appreciation of how these Maghrebi writers explode the boundaries of Western and Arabic literary genres sets the stage for a more well informed understanding of the problem of how to represent two types of education which developed these hybrid identities. In the following chapters, I will explore the ways that formal and informal sites and sources of education sometimes act against each other, and will discuss how authors represent aspects of these sites—classrooms,

examinations, teachers, parents, home, and community, to name a few examples—in order to examine and negotiate hybrid identities.

CHAPTER 3

FORMAL SITES OF EDUCATION

Maréchal Pétain, nous écoliers de Dahomey
Nous te saluons—nous te saluons encore
Aujourd'hui…
Afin d'achever l'œuvre commence
Sauver la France entier
Nous autre, travaillerons avec ardeur et confiance
Et tu seras fier de nous
Notre Maréchal Pétain, Notre Papa

(Biokou Saolmon, an African teacher from Porto-Novo, Dahomey, Senegal, 1941)

Introduction

The previous chapter deals with negotiations of identity that take place through writing and generic experimentation, and in the next two chapters I analyze literary representations of formal and informal sites and sources of education that engender these very negotiations. Leila Sebbar's *L'arabe comme un chant secret* (2007), Assia Djebar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007) and *L'amour, la fantasia* (1985), Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* (1956), Driss Chraïbi's *Le passé simple* (1954), Hélène Cixous's "My Algeriance" (1998), and Albert Memmi's *La statue de sel* (1953) interrogate formal sites of education by showing how the duplicity inherent

in classrooms, examinations, and prizes contributes to the authors' burgeoning sense of alterity and rupture with the dominant culture. These texts bear witness to the dissemination of France and French identity occurring through French colonial schools.

I first address sites and sources of formal education, which I conceptualize as that which takes place inside the school or classroom, through teacher instruction. Classrooms, examinations, and teachers carry French values and are employed as part of French colonial policy, on the "front lines." The objective of French education in the Maghreb was to teach French identity, and this concept includes the French language, citizenship, and political ideology, for example. Formal education operates in opposition to informal education provided in the home and native community and often provides an education that challenges that of the home culture. A French education is a double-edged sword: it equips students with advanced skills and cultural competence in the Western world that can lead to higher education, a better job, and thus greater financial stability. At the same time, however, it creates a cultural rupture.

The texts discussed in this chapter depict sites and figures of the education system that France wielded in order to assimilate—to colonize—indigenous Maghrebis. These representations challenge preconceptions of the purpose and methodology of education. Furthermore, French education was intended to produce native cadres who could aid in French administration of North Africa and while the opportunities provided by such an education were impressive, the problems involved with working for a colonial power were complex for many Maghrebis. Essentially, French education in the colonial Maghreb was intended to create French citizens and to extend and reinforce the Empire. In examining these representations of education,

the child's gaze reflects upon the normative space of the French classroom, a space which creates a double consciousness in the colonial subject, removing him discursively, linguistically, and culturally from the home culture. In other words, formal French education instills cultural knowledge and value systems that are contradictory to that of the home and community.

Schools

Memmi recalls attending two types of schools he attended as a child, one of which is a *kouttab*, a type of religious school.

> Avant d'aller à l'école primaire, je fréquentais un kouttab, l'école religieuse du quartier où tous les matins le rabbin nous faisait répéter à haute voix et tous ensembles les prières rituelles. C'était un beau charivari, que peut encore entendre le promeneur étonné, qui s'aventure au cœur du ghetto. (188)

Education in North Africa had traditionally been the provenance of the local mosque or synagogue. *Médersas* (as well as several Jewish *shivoth* in major cities) were established to teach law and religion to boys, and these schools bonded Islam and the community since they propagated a cohesive social order, taught children "how to be" Muslim or Jewish, and bonded them to the wider religious community as well as to the secular and cultural community. Education was driven by religious tradition, as religion sought to train followers in its dogmas and doctrines. The link between religion and education in the Maghreb was therefore a matter of social solidarity, just as it was in France, yet the defining distinction was the French system's *laïcité* and the Maghrebi system's religiosity.

The physical school, for Maghrebis, is a type of holy place. Sebbar describes her father's school as such a space: "Lieu saint. L'école de mon père, instituteur indigène de langue française dans l'école de la France, maître de l'ÉCOLE DE

GARÇONS INDIGÈNES...Mon père, maître incontesté de l'île idéale..." (26). French schools, then, are a subversion of the *médersa* in that they sought to bond the community to a quasi-dogma, that of Republican values.

Chraïbi demonstrates the difference in these two types of schools in *Le passé simple* when the father, Le Seigneur, enrolls his two sons in a *médersa* and then abandons them to the whims of the *tolba*, or teacher, an abusive man. He relinquishes his role of power only because he puts his progeny in the hands of a traditional carrier of culture, the *médersa*: "Camel et Driss sont tes enfants. Qu'ils apprennent la sainte religion. Sinon, tue-les et fais-moi signe: je viendrai les enterrer" (38). Death, the father seems to feel, is the appropriate penalty for not cooperating in order to obtain a traditional religious education.

This abandonment of the child implies that those who rupture with tradition should be cut off from society, and the severity of Le Seigneur's words reflect the importance of the training the boys will receive in the *médersa*. Chraïbi describes the link between education and Islam: "Les écoles coraniques m'ont enseigné la Loi, dogmes, limites des dogmes, hadiths. Pendant quatre ans. A coups de bâton sur mon crâne et sur la plante des pieds" (16). The violence of the school is similar to that of his abusive father, Le Seigneur, and cements the symbolic linking of tradition, the father, and the *médersa*: "la présence du Seigneur assis buste droit et regard droit, si peu statue qu'il est dogme et si peu dogme que, sitôt devant lui, toute autre vie que la sienne, même le brouhaha de la rue vagi par la fenêtre ouverte, tout est annihilé" (*ibid.* 17). His characterization of Le Seigneur and Qur'anic schools as dogmatic and violent influence the protagonist Driss's perception of the father and religion as one oppressive entity that is hypocritical and worthy of rejection.

On the other hand, Le Seigneur enrolls his sons in French school in order to gain social status through them, although he is distrustful of the secular French environment of the school. "Nous t'introduisons dans le camp ennemi afin que tu te familiarises avec ses armes. Cela et pas autre chose" (Chraïbi 199). By acknowledging the power that a French education brings, Le Seigneur demonstrates that he is willing to collaborate with the "enemy camp" in order to profit from this involvement. The father here is a traitor both to his own heritage and to his sons. He puts the sons in a school where they will be mistreated, even while he implies that the *médersa* does not provide the most beneficial education. Thus, for Driss, both types of schools lead to some sort of rupture: the *médersa* links him to his heritage and community but through means so odious that he will ultimately reject its values entirely. The French school, by contrast, gives him liberation at the price of rupture with his heritage.

The French school ultimately liberates him from the stranglehold of his father. Although his father claims, "Nous [les pères] allons nous reproduire en toi, nous perfectionner" (*ibid.* 199), Driss resists becoming like his father. The father has to acknowledge that Driss will in fact be able to choose to propagate or reject traditional Islamic, Moroccan values. As Driss comes to realize, "[e]n effet les nouveaux commandements firent passer les anciens au second plan—et en quelque sort m'en libérèrent" (*ibid.* 199).

Djebar demonstrates this rupture in *L'amour, la fantasia* as she describes the rift produced by colonial education:

> Ces apprentissages simultanés [ces deux écoles], mais de mode si différent, m'installent, tandis que j'approche de l'âge nubile...dans une dichotomie de l'espace. Je ne perçois pas que se joue l'option définitive: le dehors et le risque, au lieu de la prison de mes

> semblables. Cette chance me propulse à la frontière d'une sournoise hystérie. (260-261)

Her attendance in both Qur'anic and French schools situates the problematic of formal education in the colonial Maghreb: spatial and cultural "differencing" create a rupture in perception, leading even to a kind of hysteria.

French education is intended to acculturate her, and traditional schools attempt to do the same—the two modes of formal education subvert each other. One example of such tension is in the example of the Maréchal Pétain biography that Djebar won as a prize in school.

> La fillette brandit le fameux livre de prix: son "prix d'excellence". Enfin son père s'approche lentement. D'une voix qui a dû perdre dans le brouhaha des cris et des rires, aux derniers instants de la récréation, elle a annoncé presque triomphalement: --C'est mon prix! Derrière le grillage, le père s'est arrêté à deux ou trois mètres de là. Elle croit bien faire, la fillette, agitant le livre pour rendre visible la couverture avec le portrait d'un vieux monsieur, moustachu et coiffé d'un képi...militaire...le maréchal Pétain, qui dirige alors le pays (la France et ses colonies)...Mais voici que la scène reste en suspens: il y a comme un raté. Elle ne comprend pas ; elle reste un long moment avec son bras en l'air et ce livre brandi avec photographie d'un maréchal. Elle ne sait pas encore ce que c'est qu'un maréchal! On doit pourtant déjà chanter—tous les enfants, bien rangés devant le drapeau tricolore qu'on fait lever haut, chaque matin: "Maréchal, nous voilà!" (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 33-34)

The school is under the control of Vichy France, and the anthem that students are made to sing is propaganda for that particular government. The prizes, as well, reflect the ideology of the government. Her father realizes that "Ils [l'école ou le gouvernement] ont fait exprès de choisir ce livre" (*ibid*. 35). He tells the narrator that he has been under investigation for his political affiliations, and has been threatened. Through this prize, the school is blatantly employed as a propaganda tool and intends to instruct *indigène* students in "correct" behavior and ideology.

This political ideology is representative of another, deeper, and more complex division in Maghrebi society that existed before French colonization. Cixous explores alterity from the vantage point of a Jewish female, and while the following passage deals with ethnic prejudice, it also demonstrates other divisions threatening the Maghreb.

> Once in secondary school I was not in the center. I was seen to be on the edge. It was a combat. I resisted the false communities, the false fusions. I fought and I was fought. I smelled the strong odor of racism and I rebelled. Algeria was soaked, woven, nourished, tattooed with violently racist signals. In the supposedly non-religious and republican public institutions this was not said it was lied and acted. I tried to pull off the masks. At the end of secondary school, from '51 to'53, in my class where I was the only Jew, there were three Muslim girls. Their way of being in the last row and half smiling. My way of being angry and in the first row. I knew immediately that they were the Algeria that was in store. I held out my hand to them, I wanted to ally myself with them against the French. In vain, for them I was France. They never opened. I understood their caution. (*ibid.* 18)

Wider social divisions are reflected in the classroom. Cixous demonstrates how French schools bring together different ethnicities and this exposes children to the deeply complex social and political issues of colonial society. Each child comes to school with baggage from their own families and has to negotiate that in the space of the school.

Classrooms

Classrooms are especially explosive sites of cultural confrontation because of the amount of personal interaction that occurs. French classrooms serve as locations that metaphorically and physically separate pupils from the quotidian Maghreb and place them in a French space. Secular Republican discourse in the French language

replaces[12] the first language, Islam or Judaism, and traditional culture as the standard for students of French schools. Such a transposition ignores the value of cultural capital in the classroom and situates French, the problematic colonial language, as the privileged language of the classroom and peer group.

On the other hand, the classroom also serves as a site of intellectual awakening. Cixous describes her first day of school as a spiritual experience:

> It was in the un-Frenchified Jewish dining-room-school that I had my first francolinguistic ecstasies. The room contained seven classes. The first row was the big kids. In the last row where I sat with my brother it was the level of lines and circles. From the back of the room I intercepted the magic that awaited me when I would be in the first row. I heard these prophetic words: "adjectif qualificatif." Ah my God is this what you announced to me? One day I will have the keys to the qualifying adjective! I shivered on my chair...I had the language and its subterranean passages. (16)

Her perception of the French language as a strategic point of access to mystic knowledge underscores her ease with and enthusiasm for the French education system. This passage also characterizes French as a prestige language in the ears of the colonized. It is literally a key. Having grown up in a multilingual household of Jewish Algerians, Cixous acknowledges the benefits of a French education for someone from her situation, living in a poor neighborhood and disadvantaged by her ethnicity. An elite education grants her privileges in a way that is not possible in Algerian schools.

[12] Leila Sebbar's situation is a notable exception to this tendency. Being reared in a Francophone environment by a Francophile Algerian father and French mother, Sebbar has never claimed Arabic as her native language and has written extensively about her problematic relationship with both French and North African cultures. See *Nord perdu* (1999), co-written with Nancy Huston, for further reading on the subject. Albert Memmi records his linguistic alterity as well: "Ma langue était, en effet, en fusion, un infâme mélange d'expressions littéraires ou même précieuses, de tours traduits du patois, d'argot écolier et d'inventions verbales plus ou moins réussies...Ma langue, tumultueuse, informe, était bien à l'image de moi-même, ne ressemblait certes pas à une source limpide" (126).

Djebar experiences alterity as well, but as a Maghrebi among her European peers. Her *pied noir* friend Jacqueline symbolizes this division when another friend declares, "Les Françaises? Toutes des dévergondées!" (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 200). Jacqueline is freer than her Muslim peers, thus their imposition of their own sexual norms upon her situate her as "shameless." Djebar realizes:

> Je ne suis jamais entrée chez elle, ni elle chez nous. Sans doute qu'une fois au village, retrouvant mon espace familial, je reprenais d'instinct "mon rang", celui de ma communauté, les "indigènes"; quant à "eux", eh bien, en langue arabe, avec ma mère (comme avec les femmes du bain maure), c'est à peine si nous les nommions: "eux"; c'étaient..."eux", sans plus! Ainsi la partition coloniale restait-elle pérenne: monde coupé en deux parties étrangères l'une à l'autre... (*ibid.* 201)

The space of the classroom, at first glance, where children are mixed, does not mirror the social reality of the Maghreb, where fairly strict divisions between classes, ethnicities, races, and nationalities exist. However, the classroom is a mini-France, and so French prejudices are recreated in this space. Djebar details the Muslim student protest in the réfectoire.

> A cette époque, et même dans un collège de la République qui s'affirmait "laïc", environ un jour par semaine, souvent pour quelque fête du calendrier chrétien, le déjeuner célébrait l'événement par un plat exceptionnel [qui contient du porc]...A peine arrivions-nous à la porte du réfectoire que le bruit courait, assez vite dans les rangs, que les musulmanes devaient s'installer aux "tables-pour-musulmanes." (*ibid.* 171-172)

Djebar goes on to describe her leading the Muslim students in a strike to demand an equal portion and type of food. She actually asks the *directrice* for *vol-au-vent* (*ibid.* 181) because her *pied noir* peers are able to have treats for Christian religious holidays. Such inequitable treatment underscores the hypocrisy of French schools. While claiming to be secular and following Republican values, they in fact only propagate prejudice.

Examinations

Examinations are another key site of self-interrogation for Francophone Maghrebi writers. They are presented as mainly unwinnable assessments and are equated with a general fear of "not-measuring-up." They are effectively formal classifications of students, and results serve mainly to reiterate the differences between French and *indigènes*. After all, exams reflect the cultural knowledge that societies deem imperative to be transmitted from generation to generation, and not only the content of assessments but also the methods and results of those assessments determine who "passes" to a higher status in society. Mireille Rosello notes that "an 'examination,' [is] a type of performance where there is a winner and a loser" (239). "Winners" were admitted to *lycées*, French universities, and government jobs while "losers" were relegated to inferior socioeconomic opportunities.

A written examination frames Memmi's *La statue de sel*, as the novel opens and closes with the protagonist, Alexandre Mordekhaï Benillouche, seated in an examination hall, reflecting on his childhood experiences. The exam is both a beginning and ending for him as he realizes the unfairness and emptiness of the political and academic system to which he has devoted his life. "[C]es devoirs ne me concernent plus...Comment ai-je pu m'intéresser à ces jeux si étonnamment futiles?" (Memmi 12) Through his refusal to turn in the test and be categorized as a "winner" or "loser," he effectively ends his academic career and breaks with the French educational system that has judged him throughout his life. His refusal to participate in the assessment exercise reflects his broader discontent with society in general, especially his qualification as "Jewish." He has constantly fought characterizations

that attempt to reduce him to being "Jewish" or "Arab," and so has existed "en perpétuelle rupture" (*ibid.* 362).

In *Nedjma*, Mustapha's exam experience reflects the same "rupture perpétuelle" and "lutte silencieuse" (Memmi 13) that colonial students describe in French schools. The French school calendar is based on Christian holidays and, as such, is an affront to Islamic students since it denies the importance of their religious observances. On the day of a composition "[t]ous les absents sont des musulmanes" (Kateb 209) because it is the Muslim holiday Mouloud. "Nos fêtes ne sont pas prévues dans vos [les Français] calendriers" (*ibid.* 209), Mustapha tells the teacher, Monsieur Temple, for which he is suspended for a week, doubling his marginalization. He pointedly evokes Islam and expresses indignation at the refusal of the French school to recognize religious difference. He has acted outside the character of a "good colonial" and "good French student," so he is physically placed outside the school.

Chraïbi's *Le passé simple* depicts the protagonist, Driss Ferdi, reclaiming the assessment process by rejecting the provisional form of a traditional French essay exam and deciding to write about Morocco instead, a subject which better reflects his knowledge. In this way, he can demonstrate what he knows rather than be judged on what he does not know, namely, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, a "devise aussi rouillée que la nôtre [la culture maghrébine]" (Chraïbi 212). Driss is asked to write on these French values and composes one essay that rejects formal essay techniques such as thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Instead, he uses informal, coarse language to rail against the strictures of the French education system, equating his father to the *épreuve*. Le Seigneur and the exam act as gatekeepers whose standards Driss can never quite meet. Driss does not believe that his father is truly worthy of the honorific "Haj" any more

than he believes that *liberté, égalité*, and *fraternité* are real values of France. This double rupture at two cultural sites evidences Driss' perception of the incommensurate values of these two father figures, France and Le Seigneur/Morocco.

As is the case in the other texts discussed, an uneasy alliance (or perhaps entente) is psychically formed for all of the narrators. Having been reared with the idea that "Algeria *is* France" and that Morocco and Tunisia are integral parts of France's civilizing mission, these narrators view themselves as having a double consciousness (at best) or split allegiances. Yet the characteristic that unites them all is akin to Driss' realization: "au fond du pot de miel il peut y avoir de la merde. Symbiose oui, mais: symbiose de mon reject de l'Orient et du scepticisme que fait naître en moi l'Occident" (Chraïbi 205).

Driss's double rejection of the father and the French is perhaps the reason for the style of the second essay. The second essay employs a completely different technique, in which Driss addresses the examiners directly and uses cleaner and grammatically correct language whose register is appropriate to the situation. He insists on being "Arab," or at least a Frenchman's idea of an Arab, but also on having an identity through writing.

> Je n'ignore point, messieurs les examinateurs, qu'une copie d'élève doit être anonyme, exempte de signature, nom, prénom ou marque propre à en faire reconnaître l'auteur. Je n'ignore point non plus cependant qu'une toile révèle aisément le peintre. C'est dire qu'il y a quelque temps déjà que vous avez percé ma personnalité: je suis arabe. Permettez en conséquence que je traite ledit sujet en tant qu'arabe. Sans plan, sans technique, gauche, touffu. Mais je vous promets d'être franc...Pourquoi cette anecdote? Elle prétend signifier que l'auteur de cette dissertation est un Oriental pourvu d'un vocabulaire français de quelque 3 000 mots, à moitié éduqué, à moitié révolté et depuis 48 heures placé dans de mauvaises conditions tant matérielles que morales. (Chraïbi 207-208)

He insists on his essay being outstanding on its own terms and recognizes that he has been educated to serve the dominant culture. Identifying himself as an Arab highlights the inscription of an involuntary marker on him, therefore he subverts this categorization by writing about his experiences and situating himself outside the collective (whether colonial or Arab) rather than submitting to particularization. This moment of writing, a mise-en-abyme of the novel itself, announces to French and Moroccan systems of power that he, being doubly placed in both systems, can regard both objectively and therefore choose what to retain or to reject from each culture.

Such a position carries severe consequences for Maghrebi authors and their fictional protagonists. For his daring, Driss is dubbed the "Luther marocain" ("la vraie jeunesse marocaine est là") (Chraïbi 214) and given a Mention Bien (*ibid.* 213), both Occidental praises. While he critiques his society, he resists authority by yet again refusing to "play along" with another teacher, Joseph Kessel, and is threatened: "j'aurais [M Kessel] dû vous mettre un beau zéro" (*ibid.* 216). The prohibition of the rejection of the collective is thus reinforced as was the case with Le Seigneur's threat at the *médersa*. Other texts, such as *La statue de sel* and *Nedjma*, discuss the rejection of overarching classifications (through participation in school and formal assessments). Benillouche's refusal to hand in his written exam in *La statue de sel* results in the school denying him a baccalaureate degree. Similarly, Mustapha's rejection of school in Kateb's *Nedjma* leads to his imprisonment. Kateb notes the advantages of a French education in this passage: "Fallait pas partir. Si j'étais resté au collège, *ils* ne m'auraient pas arête. Je serais encore étudiant, pas manœuvre, et je ne serais pas enfermé une seconde fois, pour un coup de tête. Faillait rester au collège…" (49). Mustapha regrets leaving school and having to suffer jail for his activities.

Teachers

Teachers play another integral role in formal education since they function as secondary parental figures. At home, the mother is physically and emotionally closest to the child, and her language is crucial to his development. As Réda Bensmaïa and Hedi Abdel Jaoud have shown, at school, and specifically in French schools in the colonial Maghreb, the teacher replaces the mother by teaching French as well as how to function in (French) society. Furthermore, the teacher becomes the carrier of tradition (albeit foreign tradition) and gatekeeper to culture: French mores replace Maghrebi ones, and the French language replaces Maghrebi ones.

It follows then that school as the provenance of the secondary parent, the teacher, is a site of rupture and resistance first because of the idealization of the French teacher and the resulting replacement (at this site at least) of the mother or father. Children's allegiance toward the family and home environment are divided due to this new, idyllic figure who teaches them how to "be" in the world and who communicates in "teacher's" language.

In *Nedjma*, the teacher, Paule Dubac, is a type of fantasy for Lakhdar and she plays the role of a substitute mother. She comes from a land far away, she is French (and all that such a word implies to him), her parents might live in a castle, she never has ink stains on her fingers or clothes—in sum, she is a fantastical being come to life. More striking than his idealization of Mlle Dubac is his unfamiliarity to her: "Mustapha, page 17. –Aïe [Lakhdar dit] elle m'a donné le nom des autres!" (Kateb 194). She knows he has an Arab name, but she still fails to single him out from the collective. She changes his identity or, rather, gives him a new identity as she renames him and teaches him French identity through the French school.

At the same time, he comes to see his biological mother differently. Her name is Ouarda, "Rose en français" (*ibid.*)—Lakhdar has literally translated the identity of his mother and identifies the maternal using the tongue of a new mother figure, Mlle Dubac. Likewise, we see the change in perception—the rupture—that he has towards his mother. Rather than list his mother's good qualities, he lists negatives: "Elle sort pas. Elle lit pas" (*ibid*.) and then he fantasizes about Mlle Dubac taking care of him like a son.

Like Lakhdar's encounter with the fairy tale-like Mlle Dubac, Djebar's narrator's first encounter with poetry through her teacher Madame Blasi is an emotionally intense one, close to a religious experience.

> [E]lle qui m'a donné, oui, la première à m'avoir donné à boire le tout premier vers français, prononcé comme j'étais auparavant habituée à recevoir seulement les versets du Coran...je reçois un premier ébranlement...Je réentendrai si souvent, plus tard, la voix de cette femme aux ongles rouges, au visage osseux, qui soudain muée en prêtresse, officie dans le silence de nous toutes, de mon cœur qui sourdement bat: *Mon enfant, ma sœur / Songe à la douceur*. (Djebar *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 116-117)

However, while Mme Blasi helps the narrator develop a love for French poetry, this literary knowledge does not fully satisfy. When the narrator meets her boyfriend, who attends a *médersa* and knows classical Arabic, she falls in love with classical Arabic poetry almost as much as she does with the young man. She laments:

> [L]e français ne pouvant en rien rendre les allitérations, les allusions, les double ou triple sens d'un mot pivot, le jeu intérieur des rimes arabes...Oui, vraiment, le français devient langue morte quand il n'est capable que de traduire le 'sens', non la pulpe du fruit, ni la vibration de la rime! (*ibid*. 308).

Like Lakhdar, she is disappointed by her French education. It has not nourished her completely.

Sebbar's position, conversely, is different because her parents both teach in a French school, so she is surrounded by France even more so than Djebar is, who is in a boarding school. Sebbar's father has married a woman who represents the colonizer, yet the father symbolically occupies the space of France. Because of this, the mother's and father's spaces intermingle, and their roles are distorted, just as, through informal education, the roles of parents, home, and community become blurred. Sebbar's situation provides an extremely rich case study in the following chapter's discussion of informal sites of education. She writes of her father's own ambivalence towards his intimate links with Sebbar's mother, the teacher and colonizer.

> Non. Mon père ne parle pas la langue des bonnes ni celle des garçons sauvages qui nous injurient chaque jour d'école. Je ne dis rien à mon père de ces blessures quotidiennes dès que je franchis le portail qui nous sépare du chemin hurlant. Longtemps après, très longtemps, mon père, en exil dans le pays de ma mère et de la langue qu'il aime, lira ce que j'écris de sa langue, ni du pays, de son histoire, de ses histoires. Rien. C'est le silence, obstinément, du côté du père, de l'arabe, de l'Algérie ancestrale...Le silence de la langue arabe. (47)

Sebbar's situation is emblematic of the double-edged sword of French colonial education. The sites and sources of formal education were France's true front line in the colonization of the Maghreb. The classroom, where mixing, hybridization, and cross-cultural conflict and contact occurred was not only a battleground. They also liberated the above authors from particularist identities and provided hybrid frameworks of knowledge and literatures that led to the development of new Maghrebi literary canons.

Conclusion

The space of the school delineated a visible border between French and Maghrebi worlds, and classrooms, examinations, and teachers were used by French policymakers to colonize the "hearts and minds" of young Maghrebis, that is, to assimilate a young generation of *indigènes* into the world of the Republic. However high minded French aims were, the treatment of these young people's families, ethnic groups, and larger milieu as outsiders and inferiors attested to the failure of the professed Republic values of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. The secularism and French language education in French schools distanced schoolchildren from their parents and their native cultures. It separated them from less privileged peers in everyday Maghrebi life. It also set them up for division from European peers in school life. French secularism in school was anathema to Maghrebi traditional education (that of the *médersa*), leading parents and leaders to mistrust the intentions of French schools.

Such differences incited these children, who would later become authors, to confront and interrogate authority. Through their texts, they repudiate French political, ideological, and literary authority even as they continue to engage with and work through French and Maghrebi influences. Furthermore, the oppositional gaze of children reveals the complexities, ruptures, and hypocrisies of the colonizer-colonial's relationship and allows them to compare "childhood and nation, childhood and power, and childhood and identity…Childhood is a universal experience, a 'place' to which all women and men belong, and which offers a new place to examine the enduring legacy of colonialism" (Attignol 10). A child's gaze serves as a subversive witness (*ibid.* 39) to colonial education and its ideological baggage.

CHAPTER 4

INFORMAL SITES OF EDUCATION

...ce sont des âmes d'ancêtres qui nous occupent.

(*Kateb Yacine* Nedjma)

Introduction

As a counterbalance to formal education discussed in the preceding chapter, I now turn to informal sites and sources of education. I conceptualize informal education as that which takes place outside the classroom and under the tutelage of family and peers. The mother and father (and in certain cases the extended family) become teachers, and the community functions as a classroom. The objective of this education is often directly the opposite of French formal education: in informal sites outside of the French colonial school, children acquired the rudiments of a "Maghrebi identity." This broad term includes language (Arabic, Berber, and Jewish patois, among others), domestic habits, home life, gender roles, religion, and community, to name but a few examples. How does one become Algerian? What does it mean for a Maghrebi girl to dress modestly? Can one communicate with Arabic or Berber speakers in one's family? These are just a few of the questions that Maghrebi authors situated at a cultural crossroads ask. Informal education therefore operates in opposition to formal education because it provides a *formation* that subverts that of the colonizer. It provides an oppositional viewpoint, an alternative, that confronts the colonial aim to normalize Frenchness and reduce Maghrebi identity to that of "the colonized" or "Other," i.e., not-French.

In their autofictional narratives, Driss Chraïbi, Albert Memmi, Hélène Cixous, Leïla Sebbar, and Assia Djebar insist on the importance of informal sites of education, such as parents, home, and community, as sources of resistance to the French education they received. These writers highlight the role of the Maghrebi community in their intellectual and social development, demonstrating that parents and even servants are powerful forces operating outside the "citizen-making machine" of the secular French education system. The Arab community beyond the schoolroom competes for "hearts and minds" and, through socialization, offers a counterbalance to colonial domination.

Iconoclasts such as Chraïbi (*Le passé simple*), Memmi (*La statue de sel*), Cixous ("My Algériance"), Sebbar (*L'arabe comme un chant secret*), and Djebar (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* and *L'amour, la fantasia*) challenge mores of gender, religion, and social hierarchy, examining Maghrebi values while also critiquing French rule. These authors, as products of Maghrebi society and the French educational system, write from a unique position—between both worlds—to objectively judge both France and the Maghreb. Their unique social position affords them the freedom to reject collective identity and create their own hybrid identity and voice. They remain nonetheless indebted to the adults within their communities who helped to shape this consciousness.

Parents as Subversive Teachers

I first address literary representations of how Maghrebi parents, along with teachers, serve as primary educators. Their desire to rear children "in their image" subverts the French school's objective of citizen education. Children educated in the French system come to judge their parents, who are marginalized linguistically,

culturally, and/or financially by the French community. They see their parents and native culture through the lens provided them in the French system, one which challenges numerous Maghrebi mores and values. The tension produced by these opposing outlooks is liberating because it affords the author/narrator the freedom to choose and reject certain problematic Maghrebi norms. Yet this lens produced by a French education also leads to rupture with the family and community. This perspective is key in the development of hybridity and relates to the techniques by which identity is negotiated, articulations of alterity, the use of autobiography, and the development of Maghrebi autofiction. I view these sources of education as subversive because they are represented as oppositional figures. Moreover, their placement outside the French system and their lessons which counter those of the French classroom operate against official French discourse.

The Father

The father tends to be the dominant parent in the majority of texts discussed here. His position of power is re-evaluated in each text since he occupies an authoritative role in the household and thus embodies the values of the home. He is therefore an insider and leader, even if, to the French world, he is an outsider because of his ethnic and national origins, as well as his language and religion. As a mouthpiece of the home culture, the father is a type of teacher, whether of language, values, religion, etc., and as such, he belongs to an insider group (the wider community and Maghrebi culture) that becomes problematic to the narrators and must be either claimed or rejected.

The protagonist Driss's rejection of his father, Le Seigneur, in Chraïbi's *Le passé simple,* is the most violent and blatant example of such a refusal of the father.

"Haj, nous ne sommes plus haj. Père, nous ne l'avons jamais été. Seigneur, notre trône est à présent un tas de fumier, du fumier de porc et de chien" (170). In Chraïbi's text, the father, as his nickname implies, embodies the paternal and the religious against which Driss rages. Le Seigneur is a martinet who silences his family through vicious outbursts that thwart any criticism. "Sa loi est indiscutable" (14), Driss explains. Le Seigneur's control over his household mirrors the control that religion holds over Maghrebi society: his word is the law and there is no separation of the father from his household. Similarly, in Maghrebi society, Islam is inseparable from society, and the religion dictates values and mores in the same way that Le Seigneur dominates his family. Danielle Marx-Scouras explains Chraïbi's double characterization of the father as both tyrant and colonized:

> [T]he "despoliation of childhood" and the concomitant loss of identity were brought about not primarily by the French, but by Islamic fathers who acquiesced to colonialism and then colonized women, children, and the underprivileged classes in their own society. The 'Seigneur' and French colonial rule are thus, in Chraïbi's mind, different aspects of the same phenomenon. (135)

Driss's rejection of Le Seigneur is due to the abuse he and his family have suffered, but Chraïbi employs members of the family as metaphors for the state of a colonized Morocco. Double colonization through imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism breeds resentment and inevitably leads to revolt and rejection of oppressive power. Driss' narrative is, however, a rejoinder to the silencing effect of Le Seigneur. To the father's word, "ainsi parlait le Seigneur" (*ibid*. 126), Chraïbi presents the reader with the son's reaction: a total rejection.

Protagonists rupture with the father in the majority of texts dealt with here. The father problematizes belonging and home because he acts as a gatekeeper of traditions which, while indeed "home," still weigh heavily on and even prohibit

individual expression and freedom. The child narrator must accept or break with the father's values, and these values usually tend to be heavy burdens that do not allow for outlooks and values the child has learned in French schools.

For example, Djebar details two incidents involving her father's abhorrence of her showing her legs in public. "[J]e ne veux pas que ma fille montre ses jambes en montant à bicyclette!" (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 55) "Je ne veux pas que ma fille montre ses jambes devant les autres au village!" (*ibid*. 62) After the second episode, Djebar re-evaluates her perception of her father—he is a man who is educated, a school teacher, yet still so conservative that he cannot entertain the idea of his daughter breaching social etiquette for exercise or for a school gymnastics competition. He has, as well, placed his daughter in a boarding school in order to allow her to obtain a French education, yet he sets her apart from her peers by refusing to allow her to assimilate except according to his own standards. She is shamed by his reactionary stance and only later realizes that it is her father's prudish and controlling gatekeeping that keeps her from showing her legs. "Ignorante du trouble profond que cela introduisit en moi (une brèche dans la statue paternelle que mon amour filial avait, d'emblée, dressée)…Des années plus tard, il lui arriva de me rappeler l'austérité de mon père, sa rigueur puritaine de censeur…" (*ibid. Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 63). The narrator's father articulates limits for her in the same way that Driss' father does for him. Disagreement with these limits is not enough—active rejection must be accomplished in order to achieve genuine self-expression.

As seen in Djebar's previous example, intergenerational gender roles also bring mores into question. Djebar has written of herself as "la fillette arabe allant pour la première fois à l'école…main dans la main du père" (*L'amour, la fantasia*

11)—a girl physically guided by her father—and also of herself as her mother's guide: "Ma mère…a besoin de ma main. Moi, à trois ans peut-être, puis à quatre, à cinq, je sentirai qu'une fois dehors mon rôle est de la guider, elle, devant les regards masculins" (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 14). In the second example, the girl has appropriated the role of guide and protector, and in both examples, the Maghrebi female who is led plays a passive role, steered through society. Vulnerable members of society require a guide, and if this social order is ruptured, abandonment follows, especially for females. Djebar writes, "Je n'ai plus de 'maison de mon père'. Je suis sans lieu, là-bas, non point seulement parce que le père est mort, affaibli, dans un pays dit libéré où toutes les filles sont impunément déshéritées par les fils de leurs pères" (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 427). The break in traditional social order after the end of colonialism comes with abandonment because negotiation of this unknowable in-between is impossible except, perhaps, in writing, once again highlighting the negotiation of identity through literature.

Marginalization of the father as Other also points to the problem of resisting the social order. As Jews, Cixous's and Memmi's fathers are set apart and their children witness their marked alterity. This recognition is significant because it leads to the realization of Maghrebi society's (and, during Memmi's and Cixous's childhoods, Vichy France's) marking of Jews as outsiders.

Both authors recount the realization of their Jewishness, which marked the confrontation of formal and informal educations. As Benillouche leaves for summer camp in Memmi's *La statue de sel*, he becomes acutely aware of his difference as a Jew, surrounded by Europeans: "Nous étions seuls, dans une foule européenne…Je les vis [mes parents], pour la première fois, gauches et honteux d'eux-mêmes, tout leur prestige abandonné à l'Impasse. Ils chuchotaient, probablement gênes de leur

patois, qui m'apparut vulgaire et déplacé" (*ibid.* 59). Through his childhood gaze he witnesses his parents' alterity and feels shame at being physically, religiously, and culturally different from the other *pied noir* families. The summer camp literally removes him from his quasi-grotesque parents to *la colonie*, where he will be "properly" socialized and cleansed under the civilizing and sanitizing influence of the French.

Benillouche's realization of the father's alterity is important because it cements his own feeling of difference which conflicts with the dominating French discourse of acceptability and unacceptability. His experience in the summer camp is an example of this discord.

> [P]our la première fois, je rencontrai l'explication d'une faute ou d'une tare par le judaïsme de son auteur. Le sergent, hurlant, nous révéla pourquoi Mimouni avait eu cette idée ignominieuse: Mimouni était juif et les juifs ont un penchant irrésistible au commerce. Ce fut la première expérience d'une définitive habitude: j'appris à associer juiverie et mercantilisme. (62)

He experiences the shame of his family's difference, and then he realizes that this is the wider social sentiment toward him as well. The camp, an informal site of education, teaches him a societal prejudice and has instilled in him an awareness of his and his family's alterity. Maintaining respect for his ethnic milieu becomes more difficult as he proceeds to change and stand apart through education. Therefore, rejecting or re-evaluating the father and all that he symbolizes is essential for each of the narrators to develop self-identity.

Cixous, on the other hand, treats her father's alterity more sympathetically as she witnesses the results of Nazism when her father is forced to change his medical specialization due to Vichy racial policy: "[t]hat we were pariahs relieved me obscurely, like being true...To survive, my father became a podiatrist. Vichy which

had forbidden him the treatment of bodies had nonetheless abandoned to him the corns of the feet" (13). Politically authorized differencing is linked in Cixous's essay to the physical differencing, through circumcision, of Jewish identity. As a female, Cixous never underwent this marking (she mentions her brother's being circumcised), yet her family was purposefully situated apart by the Arab Algerian community. "To be inside [i.e., to live in the Jewish quarter] was also to be outside" (*ibid*. 7). Both Cixous and Memmi are set apart by their Jewish ethnicity, and they undergo the trauma of witnessing the father as a marginalized, second-class citizen. The raw gaze of the child, bereft as it is of knowledge of social hypocrisies, witnesses the father's shame as a trauma that incites rupture between generations.

As Jarrod Hayes argues, "Remembering what should be forgotten, Maghrebian childhood narratives often ... nourish and endlessly cherish the haunting of childhood memories that will not go away. They bring back a childhood past to infect the present of narration" (241). Consciousness of marginality or fractures in the façade of paternal power illuminate the traumatic childhood experience because they do not accord with expected power structures learned from school or from society. Society's gaze upon the father negatively influences the family unit.

The Mother

The mother is also a source of subversive informal education. Rather than a gatekeeper, she is a symbol of home and belonging. She literally "homes" the child by giving him a location (in the guise of her person) that grants identity. Touria Khannous cites Doria Cherabti Merabtine in order to elaborate the link between woman and tradition in the Maghreb:

> [The woman's state] expressed, to an extent, the will of a society that was deprived of everything and wanted to survive...[S]ociety took refuge in tradition and custom...In this function of biological and symbolic reproduction assumed by women, it is the whole community's survival which is perpetuated. It is on women's side that one can find the identity of these deprived people. To this end, the Islamic order is jealously preserved. (176)

The protection of the female ensures the continuity of society, in other words. Woman and society are therefore linked and, in patriarchal culture, interdependent. The father's guiding hand (in reference to Djebar's trope) protects the honor of the family as well as that of society.

All authors discussed in this chapter problematize the representation of the mother and situate her prominently in their texts[13]. Sebbar's and Chraïbi's characterizations of the mother are negative—they use the mother as a symbol of the nation. In Sebbar's case, her mother represents the France that has colonized the "fatherland," which is literally her father's land, Algeria. Her mother is distrusted and slandered, and Sebbar, even as a young girl, recognizes that she peripherally shares the guilt of the colonizer mother in the eyes of Algerian society. Notably, Sebbar characterizes the family's Algerian maids and her paternal female family members (also Algerian) as the sole positive females in her essay collection.

Two main characterizations of the mother, as evil or weak, situate the mother, or more specifically, the female, as a problematic archetype, a kind of receptacle of representation. Sebbar's depictions of not only of her mother but of the women in her paternal family portray the women of the father's Algerian culture as idealized, heroic mothers, in opposition to her French mother, "La Française" (23). Sebbar describes how her grandmother interacts with her son yet keeps watch over the daughter of "the

[13] Memmi is the exception here since he foregrounds the protagonist Benillouche's experiences in order to emphasize the personal, autofictive experience of rupture with his culture.

Frenchwoman" all the while: "[e]lle parle en arabe avec son fils, le marie de la Française. Je ne sais pas ce qu'elle lui dit. Je ne saurai jamais ce qu'elle pense, lorsqu'elle me regarde ainsi je sens les yeux de l'inquisition" (*ibid.*). Her grandmother's gaze marks her, as well as her mother, as Other. This scrutiny of the colonizing female turns the gaze around in much the same way that Djebar's females in the chapter "Les Voyeuses" in *L'amour, la fantasia* gaze upon the public from under their veils: "elles ne sont pas invitées, mais elles ont le droit de regarder...Ces non-invitées sont donc introduites au sein de la fête en espionnes!" (286). The colonized female acts rather than is acted upon, exploiting symbols of tradition (the Arabic language and the veil) in order to subvert the control that the colonizer supposedly retains over her. In this way, the grandmother's gaze is subversive and teaches the young Sebbar that the value she and her father attach to the mother as a Frenchwoman is not shared by everyone, not even the family. This representation of the mother leads to a realization for the young Sebbar similar to that of Memmi and Cixous: she recognizes her own alterity through the gaze of others upon a parent.

Sebbar's family embodies the political tensions in which she lives: "mon père est colonisé et ma mère colonisateur (colonisatrice?)" (25). Her perception of her mother as a "colonizer" sets her apart and implies that she has taken her father (or Algeria) by force. Furthermore, as a type of teacher, she has taught her daughters Frenchness. "Lire, écrire, coudre, tricoter, cuisiner, jardiner, faire un bouquet, être jolie, obéissante, ordonnée, studieuse, serviable, habile, parfaite, fille modèle d'une mère modèle. Mon père est fier de sa femme, de ses filles...[les] enfants forment une petite France" (*ibid.* 33). The mother, as a Frenchwoman, has colonized the father's land, Algeria. In the eyes of traditional Algerians—those represented by the gaze of the grandmother—the French mother is a seductress with the power to lure away the

father, the guide and gatekeeper of traditional Maghrebi culture, from his origins: "[mon père] a choisi Satan" (*ibid*. 33).

Her use of the noun "Satan" (Sebbar 26) as another name for her portrays her mother as Satanic, the embodiment of evil because of her Frenchness. Sebbar never characterizes her mother as abusive, so the reader may assume that the use of such a strong adjective is a reflection of her family's or peer group's sentiment towards her mother. The characterization of her as "Satan" is thus an articulation of her unease with alterity. Her mother embodies the root of Sebbar's difference, and this negative representation of the mother articulates the awkwardness that Sebbar senses through her paternal family's attitudes, for example.

Chraïbi's depiction of the mother is problematic in the opposite manner since Driss disparages his mother for her weaknesses yet desires to protect her from Le Seigneur's abuse. She is a "coffre à grossesses" (33)—even her body a slave to her husband—who is silenced by both Le Seigneur and the son. "Ne parle pas, repris-je. Surtout ne parle pas…Donc tais-toi, donne-moi la main et n'aie pas peur" (*ibid*. 145)[14]. His behavior is chivalrous in a sense because, despite his bitterness and violence, he does desire to protect his mother.

Furthermore Chraïbi's passage recalls Djebar's image of the male leading the female and reinforces the repetition of male-dominant culture passed down from generation to generation[15]. Indeed, the autofictional Driss notes, "Le Seigneur s'était

[14] Marx-Scouras notes that this depiction of the mother was informed by Chraïbi's "sublimation of women in French Romantic literature" (134) as overemotional and house-bound. In this way, Chraïbi literally reads French literature into his own text.

[15] Chraïbi counters this representation of the troubled mother-son relationship with *La Civilisation, ma Mère!...* (1972), a novel that depicts a woman's two sons as educational guides and, in that sense, as gatekeepers as well. However, the relationship is far less fraught than the one in *Le passé simple*. Along with the mother's knowledge comes her emancipation and venture into society. The two novels demonstrate a profound change in Maghrebi women's situations and of society's perception of them.

pleinement reproduit en moi" (Chraïbi 153): he is a Seigneur in the making because of his position of dominance within the family. Driss will silence the mother and affect a complete rupture with the father in a wholesale rejection of his family, symbols of the past and traditional values.

The mother and the nation that she represents have been slaves to the father and religion, and they are rendered powerless except in the decision to live or die[16]. On the other hand, Driss describes how his mother's nighttime weeping, which wakes him, actually creates his iconoclastic, rebellious identity: "Cette nuit-là est né Driss ton fils" (Chraïbi 151). This birth characterizes the idea of a "coffre à grossesses" differently in that it valorizes the mother's suffering and lauds her "rebirthing" of Driss. Only through the mother's suffering is Driss saved from being the reincarnation of his father. However, his mother's eventual suicide reminds the reader that rebellion cannot necessarily triumph over fundamentalism. His characterization of the mother as a victim contrasts the strong female and mother figures in the other texts discussed.

In comparison, Djebar valorizes the female (including grandmothers, mothers, and maids). She gives them active roles in *L'amour, la fantasia* and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*, thus making explicit her agenda of granting voice and agency to women. Djebar's mother figures (including grandmothers) are a comforting, if haunting, presence.

> Je pourrais me sentir là-haut protégée comme autrefois la nuit, dans mon lit de fillette, par les prières nocturnes de Mamma, la douce grand-mère disparue qui semblait parfois se glisser dans mon lit de dortoir, me caresser, me réchauffer, elle, la revenante dont je n'oubliais pas la tendresse des mains palpant à nouveau, entre les draps, mes pieds refroidis. (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 122)

[16] The mother eventually chooses suicide.

The female presences that nurture and enrich Djebar's childhood are described as nearly beatific. These figures teach the child how to belong to different environments and thus bypass the impossible problematic of dichotomous identity.

Parents, therefore, are an alternative source of education that counters the influence of the French school. The above authors characterize parents as "citizen educators" who provide an alternate source of allegiance that at once opposes colonial rule yet undermines conventional values: children witness the hypocrisy of their parents' lives (ethnic difference, violence, abuse, and the shame of colonization) and must decide what to retain, reclaim, or reject from their heritage.

Community as Subversive School

The home, to which I now turn my attention, functions as an alternate site of education that subverts the mission of the French school. Community sources of education include peers and the physical city or village. This primary site of cultural education dislocates the intended central position of the French classroom as a transmitter of values and knowledge. In doing so, it works against the creation of "good colonials" and is a space of the Maghreb that is dominated by language(s) and values other than French ones.

Djebar's placement in a boarding school situates her at the very heart of the Maghrebi-French culture clash. It demonstrates how the mixing of the two cultures in living spaces and learning environments highlights the alterity that domestic habits create despite the influence of formal education. As one example of this phenomenon, she describes fasting during Ramadan, when domestic and religious practices set Muslim students apart from non-Muslims.

> Durant ce mois, par contre, nous nous regroupions dans le même dortoir; nous nous réveillions au moment du *shor*...nous nous restions souvent jusqu'à l'aube à chanter des chansons anciennes, à évoquer chacune sa ville, son village ou son aïeule…Ce fut pourtant grâce à ces mois de jeûne que je connus plus intimement certaines de mes camarades coreligionnaires de l'internat. (*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* 183-184)

Cultural practices unite the girls and remind them of their Algerian identities. At the same time, this ritual physically and metaphorically segregates the girls from their European peers and creates a mini-Algeria inside the French school. Traditional Algeria invades the space dedicated to France, thus reclaiming the school as a site of hybridity.

The home as a counterbalance to that of the formal school is especially poignant in Sebbar's situation. Her family lives in a French school and speaks French at home, so she essentially lives in a mini-France. The Algerian household maids therefore serve as sources of cultural confrontation, and they provide her with an education in Algerian domestic habits. (As mentioned earlier, her mother teaches her and her sister how to "be" French through their dress and ability to sew, among other things.) The maids' clothing, cooking, language, and customs act in opposition to the education that her mother provides.

> Je les vois le matin et le soir, habillées en femmes arabes voiles, dévoilées, elles ont des robes à larges fleurs, je distingue à peine une mèche de cheveux près de l'oreille où le foulard ou les foulards sur le haut du front, les mèches, aplaties sur les tempes ne doivent pas dépasser, elles ajustent, lentes et précises, les couleurs violentes qui cachent la chevelure. Parce que la paume de leurs mains est rouge, je sais qu'elles passent leur chevelure au henné. Comment? Je l'entends dire, je n'ai pas assisté à la cérémonie du henné, le bain maure je n'y vais pas. Dans la maison d'école il y a une salle d'eau avec une douche, ma mère n'irait pas dans un bain maure. Tout la sépare des femmes du peuple du mon père. Tout me sépare de la mère et des sœurs de mon père. La langue, les gestes, les manières, les habitudes domestiques. (*ibid.* 35-36)

The domestic space separates peoples in this scene and the tables are turned as the Frenchwoman and child are now situated as outsiders.

Sebbar's fascination with the maids stems from her perception of them as a link to the part of her heritage that has been suppressed, as teachers of "Algerianness." She describes her family's maids as archetypal mothers:

> Des mères premières. Mères archaïques, maternelles, au corps vaste, enveloppé de linges où se perd le corps d'un enfant, mères à la langue inconnue qui ne donne pas d'ordre, qui ne se préoccupe ni de l'école ni du libre arbitre...des mères du peuple de mon père peuplent mes livres, comme des mères. (Sebbar 38)

In the same essay, she notes that she uses these women as models for her female and mother characters in her writing, indicating that Algerian women rather than La Française are idealized mother figures for her. "[L]a mère de mes livres est obstinément une femme arabe et musulmane, algérienne," (30) she writes. "Aïcha [la bonne] devient, malgré moi, la mère de mes livres" (35). These women are subversive teachers and even subversive mothers. They care for Sebbar and teach her how to be female in totally different ways than does her mother. In addition, they counter the illusion of Frenchness surrounding Sebbar, reminding her of the Algerian side of her heritage.

Culture and the pervasive influence of the home, in these texts, always challenge the superficial disguise of French mores and secular values. The struggle between Western and Maghrebi mores proves that traditional morals and standards are ingrained in children in a way that formal education can never approximate, and the greater community acts as a type of space arguably not under the control of colonial France. The street cannot be claimed by France or the French language, and the languages of the Maghreb mark the street as a place appropriated by North Africans as opposed to colonials or even *évolués*.

Sebbar poignantly describes how words are hurled like stones at her and her sister, who are marked as Others in this context.

> Et, dans la bouche des garçons, peut-être les petits frères, les jeunes cousins de Aïcha et Fatima, ceux qui nous lancent non pas les cailloux du chemin ais les mots d'une langue barbare, la langue de mon père? Des insultes, il n'y a pas de doute, où se mêlent des mots que je comprends. *Roumia* et *Roumiettes*, la Française, la chrétienne, l'étrangère, ma mère, et nous trois, les filles de cette femme (elle n'est pas la bienvenue), nous qui marchons vers l'école des filles de l'autre côté du chemin qui monte vers les rues françaises. Et le mot répété cent fois, agressif, sexuel (je le sais sans le savoir, c'est le rire satanique et lubrique des garçons qui me dit que ce mot-là est interdit mais licite contre nous, les filles de la Française), arme qui frappe et qui tue, couteau qui égorge et le sang coule, mot persécuteur, assassin, orgueil des garçons, il sont pauvres mais leur force virile est immense et ils peuvent nous donner la mort, mais, avant la mort et la honte, le mot claque, hurlé par des garçons heureux d'humilier, de terroriser les trois sœurs qui vont en silence, main dans la main[17], sur le chemin de l'enfer, le mot roule, gronde, vrille, bondit de l'un à l'autre jusqu'à nous: *nique*, *nique*…Je sais que j'ai déjà raconté, écrit ma stupéfaction muette à ne pas oser pense que la langue qui voulait ma mort, la mort de mes sœurs…c'était la langue de mon père. (45-47)

The street in this scene functions as another site of cultural confrontation, as if the girls' presence outside "French streets" is an invasion into the boys' *chemins*. Arabic words are perceived as "barbarous" weapons used to humiliate the girls, and the words' foreignness makes this encounter all the more terrifying. Forbidden words and signifiers of difference (*Roumiettes*, *la chrétienne*, and *nique*, for example) mark the girls as outsiders in this "foreign" territory and threaten them violently. As a consequence, the streets and community counter the education she receives from her Francophile parents.

Communities and peer groups furthermore operate as sites of self-interrogation and aid in the quest for self-identity, especially for those trying to

[17] Females hand-in-hand counter the image of Djebar's father and daughter pair hand-in-hand. Sebbar's father, as a Francophile (and therefore perhaps perceived as a traitor to his Algerian heritage), is not present to lead the daughter to school. The young Sebbar has ventured outside the home-school and thus must suffer the insults that are markers of her alterity.

negotiate a place within both French and Maghrebi cultures. Memmi describes his alterity in the community of the school when he recounts his embarrassment over his ignorance of popular culture: "Qui était Duke Ellington?" (121). He also recounts his unfamiliarity with telecommunications: "Je n'arrivais pas à téléphoner" (*ibid.*). This difference motivates him to integrate, which is the opposite of Sebbar and Djebar's positions. Perhaps Memmi's shame over his parents and background is to blame for such a stance. He problematizes his difference as an issue to conquer, not a characteristic with which to negotiate a hybrid space.

As a future Francophile, Memmi's home education challenges his social education, and this lack of knowledge prevents his living *à la française*, as he longs to do. His informal education, then, places him at a deficit rather than enriches him and his angst is clear when he describes the diversity of his high school, within which exists a hierarchy of students separated by language as well as by wealth.

> [L]e lycée était d'une diversité dépaysant. J'eus des camarades français, tunisiens, italiens, russes, maltais, et juifs aussi, mais d'un milieu si différent du mien qu'ils m'étaient des étrangers. Ces juifs riches et d'une deuxième génération de culture occidentale, qui moquaient comme les autres, l'accent du ghetto, s'amusaient à confondre les nasals on et an…m'exaspéraient…J'ai essayé, j'ai pris mille fois la résolution d'essayer de grasseyer constamment jusqu'à trouver le son [le *r* français] juste. (*ibid.* 119)

Since he is physically removed from the home and Jewish ghetto, he attempts to erase his alterity but fails to integrate with his peers because he cannot expunge the home from himself. "[M]es camarades, dotés par leur naissance d'un outil [la langue française] quasi parfait" (*ibid.* 124), simply "fit in" naturally to normative French culture, that is, by birth.

As well as linguistic differences, Memmi notices a difference in his hygiene habits and regards his European classmates with wonder.

> Mes camarades avaient des matins souriants, détendus, sentaient bon le parfum, tous les jours, et le savon Cadum. Je supposais avec étonnement qu'ils se lavaient complètement à chaque lever—je n'ai compris que tard pourquoi certains ont une odeur désagréable et d'autres pas d'odeur du tout. (*ibid.* 120)

These examples of community as a source of informal education represent sources of the perception of difference as well as alternative approaches to identity and identifications.

Conclusion

In conclusion, informal sites of education counter the influence of French education. They are reminders of the complex, evolving, and problematic identity of nations under the influence of colonial rule. By providing an alternative to a French identity, these sites provide resistance to colonial rule.

Children educated in French schools during the colonial period developed a shift in perception of their Arab community as well as of the French community. Through this double lens developed by a fragmented childhood, with the values of home and religion often competing against the values imparted by a French education, the child responds to the gaps in both Western and traditional Maghrebi values and mores. Both formal and informal educations compete to subvert each other, causing a rupture in which the child variously rejects or claims aspects of one culture or the other. In short, informal sites and sources of education teach Maghrebi identity(-ies).

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